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Case Against Casey, 40 min.	23
Convention of Papas, 25 min.	7
Country Justice, 15 min.	8
Cow that Kicked Chicago, 20 m. 3	2

THE TOWN MARSHAL

A COMEDY DRAMA OF THE
RURAL NORTHWEST

BY

CHARLES ULRICH

AUTHOR OF

"The Altar of Riches," *"A Daughter of the Desert,"* *"The Deserter"*
"The Hebrew," *"The High School Freshman,"* *"The Honor*
of a Cowboy," *"In Plum Valley,"* *"The Man from*
Nevada," *"On the Little Big Horn,"*
"The Tramp and the Actress," *Etc.*



CHICAGO

T. S. DENISON & COMPANY, PUBLISHERS
163 RANDOLPH STREET

THE TOWN MARSHAL

PS 635
IQU 463

CHARACTERS.

HAROLD DESMOND.....	<i>The Town Marshal</i>
MARK JAMIESON.....	<i>A Lawyer of Evil Tendencies</i>
UNCLE JEB JENKINS.....	<i>A South Dakota Farmer</i>
WILLIS HARTLEY.....	<i>A Wealthy Grain Dealer</i>
WILLIAM TORRENCE.....	<i>A Man With a Past</i>
IKEY LEVINSKY.....	<i>A Jewish Peddler</i>
LAURA HARTLEY.....	<i>A Village Belle</i>
MARY ANN HARTLEY.....	<i>A Spinster</i>
LUCY AMES.....	<i>A Village Hoyden</i>

SCENE—*South Dakota.*

TIME—*The Present.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*About Two Hours and Fifteen Minutes.*

ACT I—Exterior of Willis Hartley's Home.

ACT II—Desmond's Apartment, two weeks later.

ACT III—The Dugout in Pine Valley, the next day.

ACT IV—Same as Act I, four weeks later.

NOTICE.—Production of this play is free to amateurs, but the sole professional rights are reserved by the author, who may be addressed in care of the Publishers.

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SYNOPSIS FOR PROGRAM.

Act I—Lucy persecuted. Jenkins tells Mary Ann of his troubles. A wronged man in the clutches of a scoundrel. Levinsky hears a joke which gets him into trouble. Laura defends Lucy. Hartley's safe rifled and important documents stolen. "You are a brave man, Mr. Desmond." The plot. Jamieson springs his mine. "He bears an assumed name!" Desmond at bay. "I am a man of honor. Farewell!"

Act II. Levinsky confides a secret to Jenkins. "I am a Jew und I never buys hogs on a Saturday." Lucy fetches letter to Desmond. The quarrel. "This is my answer!" The story of a wronged man. "My father is innocent, though a convict." Jenkins courts Mary Ann. Desmond goes to discharge his duty. "I shall stand before you tomorrow without shame or I shall have ceased to live!"

Act III—Jenkins and Levinsky alone in the dugout. Jenkins explains the meaning of the word "gizzard." Torrance a fugitive. Desmond recognizes his father. The story. "Arrest me, my son, it is your duty!" "I shall do my duty and free you!" The escape. "I alone am guilty!" A woman's sorrow. "My heart is breaking!"

Act IV. Jamieson threatens Laura. "I despise you!" The threat. Jenkins pulls Jamieson's nose. Mary Ann's wedding lingerie exposed. "A new sassiety cuss word." Desmond returns. Laura sees light at last. "He assumed his father's guilt to save him!" Jamieson unmasked. "My faith in you will endure forever!" The betrothal.

STORY OF THE PLAY.

The scene of *The Town Marshal* is located in a South Dakota village where Harold Desmond holds the office of Town Marshal. Some years previous to the opening scene, his father had been convicted of a crime committed by another and on his release had assumed the name of Torrance and gone to South Dakota in search of his son, Desmond. Torrance falls into the clutches of Jamieson, a disreputable attorney who uses him as a tool to secure possession of valuable land owned by Willis Hartley, a grain broker and with whose daughter, Laura, Desmond has fallen in love. Jamieson, with the assistance of Torrance and Hartley's clerk, Clancy, steals valuable documents from Hartley's safe and armed with these, Torrance, under the name of Bothman, aids Jamieson in his plan to secure possession of the land for a syndicate, by which the lawyer hopes to enjoy huge financial profits.

Desmond goes in pursuit of the robbers and Jamieson, desiring to weaken his influence with Laura Hartley, charges that Desmond bears an assumed name. Desmond admits the impeachment and tells the story of his father's disgrace. Laura's faith in him remains unshaken and Jamieson forces Desmond to go in pursuit of Torrance, conscious of the fact of which Desmond is ignorant, that Torrance is the Town Marshal's father. Desmond meets Torrance in a dugout and on recognizing him, forces his father to escape in his son's coat and wearing his hat. When the others confront him and demand an explanation, Desmond assumes his father's guilt in the noble desire to save him from punishment, thereby risking the loss of Laura's love.

After this avowal Desmond disappears for a month, during which time he gathers proofs of his father's innocence of

crime and Jamieson's criminality. Jamieson is exposed and Desmond's honor clearly established. The troubles of the sweethearts are adjusted and happiness ensues.

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES.

DESMOND—Young man of about twenty-five, handsome and dashing in appearance. He wears dark sack coat, light trousers, white shirt, belted at the waist and broad-brimmed white hat in first three acts. In last act he wears brown street suit with Derby hat.

JAMIESON—Man of forty years, slightly gray over temples. May wear a moustache. His manner is rough; yet insinuating and at times is domineering. He wears an ordinary street suit throughout the action and presents a natty appearance.

JENKINS—A regulation farmer with a down east accent. He is sixty years old, lively and gay at all times. He wears an ordinary homespun suit in first act, with rough looking hat and in act II he wears a long coat and sports a red bandana handkerchief. In third and last acts he wears light suit with collar and long flowing tie.

HARTLEY—A quiet, unassuming man of fifty-five, always well attired in business suit of light gray material, with broad-brimmed hat, white or black, as may be deemed wise.

TORRANCE—A well appearing man of sixty, gray wig and beard. He is well educated and shows excellent manners. He wears an ordinary business suit of dark material with soft hat, white shirt, collar and flowing tie.

IKEY—A young Hebrew of twenty-two or thereabouts. He wears ill-fitting clothes, with a Derby hat drawn well down over his ears. He wears a small moustache. He is good natured and inoffensive at all times.

LAURA—A handsome young woman about twenty-two, capable of emotion and gayety as the occasion may require. She wears a street dress in first act with a stylish hat, the same costume may serve in act II and in act III. In the last act, she wears a white house gown, but no hat.

MARY ANN—A maiden of sixty years or thereabouts, strong-minded and positive. She is somewhat eccentric in her attire, but not conspicuously as her prototype in farce comedy.

LUCY—A young girl of fourteen years, lively and gay. She wears the ordinary dress of a village girl, with apron, and her hair is done up carelessly. She is a soubrette and shows signs of little education.

PROPERTY LIST.

Act I—Several rustic seats, shrubbery, etc., for garden set. Several small packages for Lucy.

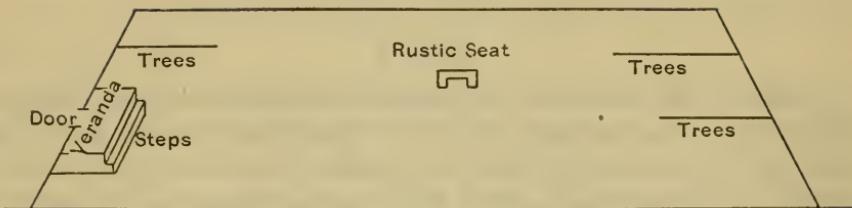
Act II—Sofa, parlor table, with three chairs. Several books and papers for table. Letter for Lucy. Revolver for Jamieson.

Act III—Rough table and two chairs for dugout. Screen for Levinsky and Jenkins to hide behind. Candle and holder for table. Revolver for Torrance. Several bunches of vegetables, etc., to hang to roof of dugout. Revolver for Ikey.

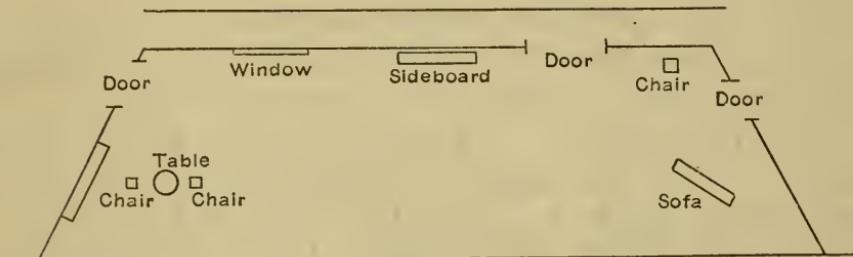
Act IV—Same props mentioned in Act I. In addition provide three sealed documents for Desmond. Letter for Levinsky. Several boxes in wrappers containing lingerie. Letter for Ikey. Document for Jamieson.

STAGE SETTINGS.

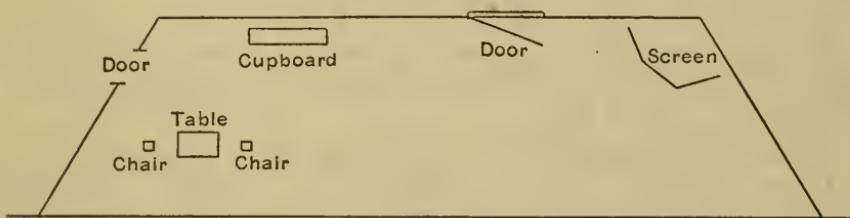
ACTS I. AND IV.



ACT II.



ACT III.



NOTE.—A set house will add to the effect of Act I, yet it is not essential and can be omitted.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of the stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *R. D.*, right door; *L. D.*, left door, etc.; *1 E.*, first entrance; *U. E.*, upper entrance, etc.; *D. F.*, door in flat or scene running across the back of the stage; *1 G.*, first groove, etc. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

THE TOWN MARSHAL

ACT I.

SCENE: *Exterior of the Hartley home in South Dakota, full stage. Set house runs obliquely R. with veranda, reached by two steps, and a practical door opening on veranda C. Set trees L. and shrubbery upstage. Flat represents a grove of trees. Rustic chair well down C. and another L. 2 E. Scene may be beautified with plants and flowers. See Scene Plot for stage setting.*

At rise enter LUCY, L. U. E., carrying several bundles. She comes down C. with a view of entering house.

LUCY (stopping C.). I don't know why I ever was born anyway. I aint got nothin' to do but work, an' I'm gittin' most awful tired of it. (*Crosses to steps of house R. and sits on steps, puffing and blowing.*) If that old maid Mary Ann Hartley, don't stop sending me to the grocery every five minutes, I'll quit my job for keeps.

MARY (off stage in house R.) Lucy Ames!

LUCY (starts and rises with a grunt). That's her. Sounds like the whistle of the old butter factory. (*Answers loudly.*) I'm coming, Aunt Mary.

MARY (off stage R.). Hurry with those groceries, child.

LUCY (going to door of house C.). That's what I get all day—hurry, child! My, but I wonder she didn't hurry up and get married. (*Loudly.*) I'm coming. (*Stops at door of house.*) I wish I was rich like Mr. Hartley so's I wouldn't have to work. (*Exit into house R.*)

Enter JENKINS, R. U. E. *He is an old farmer, lively and gay. He whistles softly to himself as he comes down C.*

JENKINS (goes to steps of veranda R. and looks into house). Be gosh! I wonder ef Mary Ann be about.

'Pears to me like I got a genuine case of softness of the heart, whenever I think of her. Guess I ought to know, by gravy! case I hed two attacks of the same complaint afore I married Sukey and 'Mandy. (*Turns C.*)

Enter from house R., MARY. She comes down steps without seeing him.

JENKINS (*turns and sees MARY, starts*). Thar she be, the neatest, trimmest filly ever yeou see, by sassafras! (*To MARY.*) How de, Mary Ann Hartley?

MARY (*surprised, comes C.*). Why, good morning, Uncle Jeb Jenkins. I'm delighted to see you.

JENKINS (*aside*). De-lighted to see me. Guess I made an impression, as the widder Brown said when she fell into her flower patch. (*To MARY.*) Yeou aint foolin' now, be you, Mary Ann?

MARY (*laughingly*). Why, certainly not. What have you been doing this lovely day?

JENKINS. Chasing birds, by gosh!

MARY (*surprised*). Chasing birds! Then you must be an ornithologist.

JENKINS (*confused*). Onery ologist, eh? Wall, I reckon I be, but I haint had the disease since I wus a yearlin', by sassafras!

MARY (*laughingly*). Are all men in South Dakota like you, Mr. Jenkins?

JENKINS. Not by a jugful. 'Mandy said there warn't another darned galoot like me in the hull country.

MARY. Who was 'Mandy?

JENKINS. Mrs. Jeb Jenkins, No. 2, by chowder!

MARY. You don't mean to tell me that you have been twice married?

JENKINS (*struts about proudly*). I don't look it, Mary Ann, but I wus, by ginger! An' I'm willin' to go it double ag'in, if so be thar's a female critter in these parts willin' to take a chance at the matrimonial grab-bag.

MARY (*laughingly*). I sincerely hope you may be able to find your affinity, Mr. Jenkins.

JENKINS. No, I haint lost any affinity, Mary Ann. Kaint find what I haint lost, by gum!

MARY (*goes to door of house R.*). You amuse me very much, Mr. Jenkins. I must leave you now, but call again and make yourself perfectly at home. (*Exit R.*)

JENKINS (*at C.*). Thank 'e, Mary Ann, I'll come, you bet! I'm plumb stuck on her, as the blue bottle said when he landed on the fly paper. I'm goin' to win that old gal and I'll make the widder Brown sick fur turning me down t'other night. (*Goes upstage and looks L.*) Thar's that old fellow I see with Lawyer Jamieson down to the co'te house today. I kinder like him, but Jamieson, why, if ever there be a crook, he's at the top of the list. (*Turns R.*) Guess I'll take that hay to my place and then, by gravy! I'll slick up and call on Mary Ann. (*Exit R. U. E., whistling.*)

Enter TORRANCE *L. U. E.* He stands and looks off with some show of emotion and after a pause, comes slowly down *C.*

TORRANCE (*as he looks about*). I could have sworn I know that man I saw down the road just now. But no, it is impossible! I see phantoms where none exist. By what devilish ingenuity did this lawyer, Jamieson, fathom my secret? No matter, I am in his power and must do his will or suffer exposure and ruin. (*Turns up L. and looks off.*) He comes. Ah, how I despise him! (*Saunters down C.*)

Enter JAMIESON, *L. U. E.* He comes down *C.* jauntily.

JAMIESON (*to TORRANCE*). Ah, you are here, Torrance? Did you finish that little business I intrusted to you this morning.

TORRANCE (*after a pause*). No.

JAMIESON (*starts*). Dillydallying, eh? (*Sternly.*) See here, my man, I wont have any delay in this business.

TORRANCE. You ask me to—to commit a crime.

JAMIESON (*laughingly*). A crime? Bah! You don't seem able to distinguish between stupid crime and advanced methods of finance.

TORRANCE (*nervously*). I can't do it, Jamieson. Please don't ask it of me.

JAMIESON (*in angry whisper*). Don't be a fool, Torrance! We are engaged in a big financial deal which, if it does not fail through your bungling, will make us both independent for life. What matters it if Willis Hartley is the victim? He is worth nearly a million and the loss of a few thousands will affect him little.

TORRANCE. But you ask me to impersonate another man and commit a forgery.

Enter IKEY, L. U. E. He stands and watches them.

JAMIESON. Quite right. There is absolutely no danger of detection.

TORRANCE (*nervously*). If I am detected, it means—means—(*hesitates.*)

JAMIESON (*laughingly*). Another term in the penitentiary, would you say? Well that shouldn't frighten a man who like you, has been—

TORRANCE (*interrupts feverishly*). Stop! I must pay the price of your silence, for I am in your power.

JAMIESON (*slaps TORRANCE jovially on the shoulder*). Now you are a man of good judgment again, Torrance. We were successful in that affair at Hartley's office last night and we will win if you do not forget that from now on you are James Bothman, of New York.

IKEY edges his way down C. silently behind them.

TORRANCE. It is an infamous affair, Jamieson.

JAMIESON. Don't let that worry you, Torrance. Now that we understand each other—

IKAY (*stepping between them—to JAMIESON*). I'm glad you understand us togedder, aint it, Jamieson.

JAMIESON (*starts*). What the deuce are you doing here? Eavesdropping?

IKAY. You take me for a roof? No, I vant you to pay me dat t'ree dollar vat you owe me two year now. Ven you pay me?

JAMIESON. You're dreaming again, Ikey.

IKEY. No, it vasn't a dream. I don't dream no more. I vonce took a dream in Chicago and some fellow took my vatch.

JAMIESON (*takes TORRANCE's arm and leads him upstage*). We'd better get out of here, or Ikey will accuse us of having stolen his watch.

IKEY (*following others up C.*). No, you don't get my vatch, 'cause I got it sewed up in my pocket.

JAMIESON (*to TORRANCE*). I am sure Hartley is not at home. We must return later. (*To IKEY.*) Some day I'll present you with a Waterbury, Ikey. (*Exeunt with TORRANCE, L. U. E.*)

IKEY (*upstage, looking off after them*). I aint no receiver of stolen goods, Jamieson. (*Turns down C.*) Vat vas dey vispering about. It vas some crookedness, 'cause Jamieson is so crooked he vould fall down on a straight road.

Enter LUCY from door of house R. She sees IKEY and runs to him C.

LUCY (*to IKEY*). Hello, Ikey.

IKEY (*L. C., admiringly*). Hello, Lucy.

LUCY. Come to buy them pigs?

IKEY. Sure. Did you tink I wanted to steal dem?

LUCY (*laughingly*). I didn't know, Ikey. Got your store started yet?

IKEY. Sure. I got a big sign over de door like dis—Ikey Levinsky, dealer in old clothes, pigs, hides, airships, etc.

LUCY (*surprised*). You ought to be a millionaire soon, Ikey. Got any insurance yet?

IKEY. Sure. I couldn't be no millionaire midout no insurance.

LUCY. I guess you're right, Ikey. I'm going to ask you a question. How many swallows make a summer?

IKEY. How many summers make a schwallow?

LUCY. No—how many swallows make a summer?

IKEY (*meditatively*). Summers—schwallows—sore t'roat, pneumonia. (*After a pause.*) Jerusalem! I don't know dot, Lucy.

LUCY. Neither do I, Ikey, but I know a South Dakota grasshopper makes a good many springs.

IKEY (*showing by facial play that the joke dawns upon him, and he smiles broadly*). Moses! Dot vas a good one. A Dakota grasshopper makes a good many jumps. So, like dis. (*Jumps about stage.*)

Enter MARY from house R. She stands at door and watches others.

LUCY (*laughingly*). You look like a kangaroo, Ikey.

IKEY. I must go now, Lucy. Ven you come down town call and see me. Good-bye. (*Goes upstage and throws kiss at LUCY who responds in kind.*)

MARY (*shocked*). What in the world do you two mean by throwing kisses at each other?

IKEY (*startled*). Oh, Moses! She nearly caught us dot time. (*Exit L. U. E.*)

LUCY (*at C., nervously*). I was only kidding him, Aunt Mary.

MARY (*sternly*). Go to the kitchen instantly! I shall report this to Miss Hartley, never fear.

Enter LAURA HARTLEY, L. U. E. She comes down C. slowly.

LUCY (*as she goes to house R., aside*). She's jealous. (*To MARY*). How kin I help it when my goodlookin' friends throw kisses at me?

MARY. Listen to the foolish girl!

LUCY (*at door of house*). Well, I aint seeing anybody throwing kisses at an old mummy like you. (*Exit into house R.*)

MARY (*shrieks*) Old mummy! She calls me mummy!

LAURA (*laughingly as she sits in rustic chair C.*). Don't mind Lucy, Aunt Mary. She is perfectly harmless.

MARY (*angrily*). I won't tolerate her any longer. Either she leaves or I go East, back to my home, by the next train.

LAURA. No, you won't, Aunt Mary. You are too wise to listen to the sayings of an untutored girl of the West.

MARY. Well, I won't leave for your sake, Laura. But won't I thrash her when I lay my hands on her?

LAURA. Certainly not. When you learn to know Lucy better, you will make the discovery that she is a diamond in the rough.

MARY. Well, I hope she won't prove to be a paste diamond. Where on earth did she spring from?

LAURA. She is the child of a poor homesteader who is working a farm somewhere in Montana, I believe. Her mother died when the family was passing through here some five years ago and attracted by the homeless creature, I gave her a home.

MARY (*coming down off veranda and going to Laura C.*). You are a dear, sweet, good-hearted girl, Laura. Where's your father?

LAURA. I left him at Mr. Desmond's office a half hour ago.

MARY. That's the Town Marshal. What can your father want of him?

LAURA. Oh, then you haven't heard?

MARY (*surprised*). Heard what?

LAURA. Some thieves entered father's office last night and stole several valuable documents.

MARY. Gracious! Are there burglars in this country?

LAURA. Crime exists even in South Dakota, Aunt Mary. (*Hoofbeats heard off L. Rises and looks off L. U. E.*) Why, there comes Mr. Desmond himself.

MARY. That's the second time he's been here this week, and the first visit wasn't due to a burglary either.

LAURA (*coming down C. to rustic seat*). Why, Aunt Mary—

MARY (*interrupting*). If I'm not mistaken, Laura, this handsome Town Marshal has made a deep impression in a certain quarter.

LAURA (*sits in rustic chair*). If you allude to me, Aunt Mary, you are in error. Why, I scarcely know him. I only met him at the pound party at the Methodist church a month ago.

MARY. That's all very well, Laura, but let me tell you that love reaches the heart by the shortest pathway and—

LAURA (*interrupting*). Fie! An old maid discoursing upon love! I think you would better place another plate on the supper table, Aunt Mary.

MARY. Very well, Laura. (*Goes to house R.*) Supper will be ready in half an hour. (*Exit into house R.*)

DESMOND (*offstage, L. U. E.*). Whoa!

LAURA (*looking L., nervously*). If Aunt Mary has so easily read my heart, how about Mr. Desmond? I must learn to control myself better. (*Removes her hat and busies herself with feather.*)

Enter DESMOND, *L. U. E.* He sees LAURA, *C.*, and starts, then comes down to her smilingly, hat in hand.

DESMOND (*at L. of rustic chair C.*). Ahem! Miss Hartley!

LAURA (*looks up at him*). Ah, is it you, Mr. Desmond? Good afternoon.

DESMOND. Good afternoon. Did I surprise you? Well, I'm agreeably surprised, for I did not expect to find you at home.

LAURA. I left my father with you. Surely you did not expect to find him sitting here?

DESMOND. I'm sure I didn't know and now that I know, I wouldn't have it any different. (*Looks at watch.*) Jiminy! Where can he be? He said he'd meet me here at 5 o'clock and it's one minute past.

LAURA. He is a punctual man, Mr. Desmond, so you will not be compelled to wait long. Have you discovered any clues in the matter of the burglary?

DESMOND. Would you care if I sat down, Miss Hartley?

LAURA (*confused*). Pardon me for not asking you to do so long ago. Please be seated. (*Points to seat to R. of her.*)

DESMOND (*taking seat*). Thank you. Now, as to this burglary—I have no certain clue, but I've suspicions aplenty. (*Fumbles his hat nervously.*)

LAURA. Suspicions?

DESMOND. Yes, Miss Hartley. I received a telegram today informing me that a dangerous character—a crook—was in town.

LAURA. Have you seen this man?

DESMOND. No, but I'll have him on the carpet shortly.

LAURA. You interest me hugely, Mr. Desmond.

DESMOND (*confused*). I interest you, Miss Hartley! Really, I—I—

LAURA. Your profession, that of tracing crime, hunting down transgressors and bringing the guilty to judgment, is a romantic one.

DESMOND (*after a pause*). Well, Miss Hartley, I can't say I like it. It's mighty prosaic to me. I'd rather be a stonemason or bridge builder than accomplish the greatest feat Sherlock Holmes ever dreamed of. Both serve society in a way, but the handiwork of the bridge builder will be admired long after the feats of Holmes are forgotten.

LAURA. There is nothing prosaic about a profession that embodies all the elements of personal danger. Don't you sometimes fear for your life?

DESMOND (*laughingly*). Yes, I do. I have been so frightened at times, that my hat wouldn't stay on my head.

LAURA. I can scarcely believe you, Mr. Desmond.

DESMOND. Had any one told me a year ago that I would become a Town Marshal in South Dakota, I would have laughed at him. But I got into the drift of it somehow without knowing it and here I am.

LAURA. How came you to adopt the profession?

DESMOND. By accident, I presume. I came here four years ago, and finding nothing more respectable open to me, I accepted a deputyship under Sheriff Jones. I happened by pure luck to capture Sam Harris' gang of road agents, and my reward was my election to the responsible post of Town Marshal of Plainbury.

LAURA (*admiringly*). I often heard father speak of that exploit. You captured four desperate men alone and single-handed. How wonderful!

DESMOND. Not so wonderful as you think, Miss Hartley. The men were out of ammunition—

LAURA (*interrupting*). But you were not aware of that when you faced them and entered their lair.

DESMOND (*nervously*). Why, anybody would have done what I did. It was only a question of opportunity. A deputy sheriff must take chances if he is made of the right stuff and wants to do his duty. I merely did my duty.

LAURA. But when duty leads you to almost certain death —what then?

DESMOND. We haven't time to think of those things, Miss Hartley. We take the chance and most generally we bag what we go after.

LAURA. You are a brave man, Mr. Desmond.

DESMOND (*confused*). That can't be so, Miss Hartley, for when you look at me like that, I want to run from you like a scared wolf.

LAURA (*laughingly*). Strange that a weak woman like me should frighten so strong a man as you.

DESMOND (*plays with his hat in confusion*). Of course you don't frighten me, but since the other night when we sat on that veranda until Aunt Mary had to spring the time on us, I feel like a school boy in your presence. Why, I am afraid of myself—

LAURA. Do I inspire fear in you?

DESMOND. No, not half as much as Aunt Mary.

LAURA (*gayly*). Come, you have told me only a part of your history. There must be much more that would interest me, Mr. Desmond.

DESMOND (*starts*). There's nothing in my history to edify you, Miss Hartley.

LAURA. Tell me of your home life—your family. You had a mother—does she live?

DESMOND (*sadly*). No, she died ten years ago, the best and noblest mother the sun ever shone upon.

LAURA (*sighs*). How sad! My mother too, died when I was a mere child, and how her death saddened my life, none will ever know. And your father—?

DESMOND (*rises in agitation*). My father—my father—
(*hesitates*.)

LAURA (*eagerly*). Yes—yes—?

DESMOND (*after a pause*). He too, is—is—dead! (*Hoof-beats off stage R. U. E.*) There's your father coming, Miss Hartley. (*Goes upstage.*)

LAURA (*rises and goes to house, R.*). There is a secret in his life, but will it ever rise up between us? Heaven knows. (*Sighs*). How strangely he affects me. (*Exit into house, R.*)

HARTLEY (*offstage, L. U. E.*). Hello, Desmond. Beat me home, didn't you?

DESMOND (*calling off, L. U. E.*). By a length only, Mr. Hartley.

Enter HARTLEY, *L. U. E.* *He comes down C.*, DESMOND following him.

HARTLEY. I stopped at Jenkins' place on my way to see about buying his wheat crop. He's a lucky chap. I guess he'll thresh thirty bushels to the acre and that's doing well for this part of the country.

DESMOND. Agriculture is not my long suit, Mr. Hartley. The task of catching the fellows who stole your documents interests me far more than wheat.

HARTLEY (*laughs*). It depends upon what is in the bone, Desmond. I was raised on wheat and I expect I'll die in it. But you're right, the burglary is the question of the hour.

DESMOND. Did you have a talk with Clancy?

HARTLEY. I did, and as I expected, he denied any knowledge of the affair. Clancy has been in my employ for a long time and I can't conceive how he would aid in this burglary, as you seem to suspect.

DESMOND. I may be wrong about Clancy, but he was seen in Jamieson's office several times lately, and I surmised there was a bond between them.

HARTLEY. There's nothing wrong about that, Desmond. Jamieson drew up the very document which was stolen.

DESMOND (*thoughtfully*). That's the first clue in this affair. Take my advice, Mr. Hartley, and steer clear of this fellow.

HARTLEY. What have you against him?

DESMOND. He has a bad reputation. He is one of the proprietors of the Golden Crescent gambling house, and you should know what that place is.

HARTLEY (*laughingly*). Well, rather! I was skinned out of \$2,000 in a faro game at that place one night.

DESMOND. And Jamieson probably got one-half of the plunder. I regard him as a dangerous chap.

HARTLEY. May be so, Desmond. But why the old Harry should Clancy be mixed up in this burglary, as you think? How could he possibly profit by the theft of the documents that were taken? There was \$2,000 in the safe at the time, and if the burglars wanted real valuables, why didn't they take that?

DESMOND. There's no accounting for the tastes of burglars, Mr. Hartley. Evidently they wanted the papers and not the money. Now, to refresh my memory, tell me again the character of the documents that were stolen. (*Takes out notebook.*)

HARTLEY (*sits in rustic seat C.*). First, they took the deed to some 600,000 acres of land across the Missouri which I own absolutely.

DESMOND (*making note*). I presume the deed is recorded.

HARTLEY. Certainly.

DESMOND. Therefore not negotiable. Taken probably to ascertain precise boundaries and the like. Next.

HARTLEY. An agreement to sell this land to one Henry Bothman of New York on or before July 1 of this year for one dollar an acre.

DESMOND (*making note*). Agreement to sell at one dollar an acre. What is the land worth today?

HARTLEY. About \$1.50 an acre.

DESMOND. A valuable agreement to Bothman. Do you know this man?

HARTLEY. I never saw him to my knowledge. The deal was arranged by Jamieson, who said Bothman would appear on or before the date of expiration of the agreement.

DESMOND. Jamieson again! You can't down him. How came you to retain the agreement in your custody?

HARTLEY. It was stipulated that I was to hold the instrument until the forfeit of \$10,000 was paid, and that if the money was not forthcoming by that date, the agreement would be null and void.

DESMOND (*meditatively*). And this is the last day of June. If Bothman does not appear tomorrow, the agreement is null and void?

HARTLEY. Precisely.

DESMOND. Suppose Bothman is a mythical character existing only in the fertile brain of Jamieson?

HARTLEY. Then the agreement must lapse of its own accord.

DESMOND (*after a pause*). Suppose Bothman really existed and had repented of his bargain? Or suppose Jamieson himself had resolved to engage in a wildcat speculation and required the agreement and deed? Might not that have prompted the theft of the documents?

HARTLEY. By Jove! There is something to that! This looks very much like a conspiracy.

DESMOND. You have hit the nail upon the head kerplunk, Mr. Hartley. It is a conspiracy to deprive you of your land at a price far below the market value.

HARTLEY (*rising*). It is too deep a puzzle for me.

DESMOND. But it is not so deep that it may not be probed to the very bottom, and, by all the gods, we will do it!

HARTLEY. I think you're the man for the job, Desmond. Do your best, for I want to hold on to this property for Laura's sake.

DESMOND. To be sure.

HARTLEY. When I signed that agreement six months ago that land wasn't worth one dollar an acre. The announcement that the Indian Reservation would be opened shortly caused the value of my land to boom like a skyrocket. If I am forced to sell it now, it means a loss of more than \$300,000 to me.

DESMOND. It must not be sold, Mr. Hartley.

HARTLEY. But, hang it all! If that agreement crops up tomorrow, I'll be forced to sell.

Enter LAURA from house R. She stands on veranda and watches others.

DESMOND. Let the agreement be presented and then we will fight it tooth and nail in court, if need be. If it shows up, it will be *prima facie* evidence that Jamieson stole or caused it to be stolen from you.

LAURA (on veranda R.). Supper's ready, father. Won't you join us, Mr. Desmond?

DESMOND. I fear I have not the time, Miss Hartley. It is rather late.

LAURA. That is too bad, Mr. Desmond.

HARTLEY (taking DESMOND'S arm and dragging him to veranda R.). Nonsense, my boy! I have some things I want to show you. Have you ever played football?

DESMOND. Have I? I used to be coach for the Michigan University team.

HARTLEY. And I played half-back at Harvard years ago. Won't we have a fine time discussing trick plays, punts and the like?

DESMOND (going to veranda with HARTLEY). I shall be delighted; but I fear I shall prove a bore to Miss Hartley.

HARTLEY (laughingly). A bore! Did you ever hear of such nonsense, Laura?

LAURA. I have no fear that Mr. Desmond will ever prove a bore.

Enter JAMIESON and TORRANCE L. U. E. They discover HARTLEY, DESMOND and LAURA on veranda. JAMIESON points to them and whispers to TORRANCE.

DESMOND (his back is turned to L. U. E.). If you are willing to take the risk, I have nothing further to say.

MARY (offstage R.). Supper!

HARTLEY. Hurry up! If we allow the victuals to get cold we'll have to answer to Mary Ann, and heaven forbid! (Exeunt HARTLEY, followed by LAURA and DESMOND, into house R.)

JAMIESON (coming down C. with TORRANCE and going to veranda—aside). Invited to supper, eh? How is it that Des-

mond is so thick with the Hartleys? There is something wrong about this. Does this Town Marshal love Laura? If so, it is high time that I balk his game. (*Turns to TORRANCE C.*) You got a good view of Hartley, Torrance?

TORRANCE (*sighs*). Yes.

JAMIESON. No one in this place ever saw you until today?

TORRANCE. No one.

JAMIESON. They don't know you as Torrance, eh?

TORRANCE (*nervously*). No.

JAMIESON. Well, then, when you call yourself Botham, as you will tomorrow, it will occasion neither surprise nor suspicion.

TORRANCE (*pleadingly*). Oh, do not force this thing upon me—

JAMIESON (*interrupting*). Suppose I reveal the fact that your name is not Torrance—that you are—

TORRANCE (*despairingly*). Enough—enough!

JAMIESON. You are extremely sensitive, Mr. Bothman.

TORRANCE. You are driving me mad! Suppose the real Bothman turns up, what will become of me?

JAMIESON. But he will not turn up. Have I not told you that he has passed up the entire scheme? Have I not also told you that it was this very fact that impelled me to use you as a substitute? In a week after this agreement has been formally validated by the payment of the forfeit of \$10,000, which will be given to you in the morning, I shall dispose of it for \$200,000 to a Chicago syndicate. That's pretty good, eh?

TORRANCE. But I will have committed a crime—

JAMIESON (*interrupting*). Don't be a child and don't cross the bridge until you come to it. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. That's scripture. Do you ever read scripture, Torrance?

TORRANCE (*despairingly*). My God! Why do you mock me? I am in your power—helpless as a child in your grasp.

JAMIESON (*laughingly*). I'm glad you realize that fact. Now be pleased to act accordingly. Here's a secret. I love Laura Hartley.

TORRANCE (*amazed*). You! And do you hope to win her?

JAMIESON. I win pretty much that I go after, old chap. You thought it a hopeless task to get those papers last night, but we got them, didn't we?

TORRANCE. You deceived me in that matter and made a thief of me—

JAMIESON (*interrupting by placing his hand upon TORRANCE'S mouth*). Don't yell so loud, you fool! It wasn't me, but Clancy.

TORRANCE. What will become of me?

JAMIESON. Stop whining and I'll tell you. If this deal goes through as it should and will, if you play your part correctly, you'll be richer by \$10,000 and free to go whither you will.

TORRANCE. And you will not betray my secret?

JAMIESON. Not unless you give me cause to do so.

HARTLEY (*offstage R.*). All right, Laura.

JAMIESON. You had better return to my office and await me there. It won't do to precipitate matters. Hurry, for Hartley is coming.

TORRANCE. I dare not face Hartley now, for my manner would betray me.

JAMIESON. We must see to it that your manner improves by tomorrow.

DESMOND (*offstage R.*). Hurry back, Mr. Hartley.

TORRANCE (*starts*). That voice! (*He turns to door of house R., then reconsiders and hastily exits L. U. E.*)

JAMIESON (*aside as he watches house*). I must stake my all on this deal. He cannot suspect me of having had a hand in the burglary of his office. Will he oppose my plan to wed Laura? We shall see.

Enter HARTLEY from house R. He comes C.

HARTLEY (*to JAMIESON*). You here, Jamieson?

JAMIESON. I have come to inform you that I received a telegram an hour ago from Bothman declaring his intention of taking up your agreement tomorrow.

HARTLEY (*annoyed*). I've changed my mind about that agreement. I won't sell the land at present.

JAMIESON. You cannot evade the terms of that agreement, Mr. Hartley. The money stipulated for, \$10,000, will be paid in person by Bothman tomorrow.

HARTLEY. But I refuse to accept it—

JAMIESON (*interrupting*). The court may force you to accept. Bothman has the agreement, and you may be sure he will insist upon its fulfillment.

HARTLEY. Ah, then Bothman was one of the men who rifled my safe last night.

JAMIESON (*starts slightly, then laughs*). Rifled your safe? You don't mean to tell me you are the victim of a burglary?

HARTLEY. Yes.

JAMIESON. And you suspect Bothman? Why, he left here but is on his way back and cannot reach Pine Valley until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

HARTLEY. It is very strange.

JAMIESON. You say your safe was rifled. What was stolen?

HARTLEY. The agreement of which we speak, together with the deed to my land.

JAMIESON (*whistling coolly*). You must be dreaming, Hartley. Bothman advised me he received the agreement two months ago—

HARTLEY (*interrupting hotly*). That is a lie! I've never heard from the man since you executed the agreement. There's something wrong about this transaction, Jamieson, and, by heavens, if you are implicated, you shall taste of my revenge!

JAMIESON. Very well, sir. Mr. Bothman will be here tomorrow and you may settle with him. As for me, I wash my hands of the entire affair.

HARTLEY (*after a pause*). Well, I want to think this thing over. There's a screw loose somewhere, and, by the old Harry! I'm going to find it! (*Exit into house R.*)

JAMIESON (*looking off after him at veranda*). He doubts and a doubting man seldom accomplishes anything. That property will be mine to dispose of as I think proper.

Enter IKEY R. U. E. He comes down R. to JAMIESON.

JAMIESON (*turns and sees IKEY*). Hello, Levinsky! Here again?

IKEY. Sure. I ain't in Hoboken. I wants to ask you a questions.

JAMIESON. Well, hurry up. I have no time to waste on you.

IKEY. How many schwallows make a summer?

JAMIESON (*aside*). I'll teach this unsophisticated Hebrew a lesson. (*To IKEY.*) You ask how many swallows make a summer?

IKEY. Yes.

JAMIESON. Well, I can't answer that; but I know that one stiff punch in the solar plexus makes a good fall. (*He strikes IKEY, who falls.*)

IKEY (*sits C. looking astonished*). I never said anyt'ing about a fall. De right answer was dat one Dakota grasshopper makes a good many jumps.

JAMIESON (*laughingly*). Well, you may jump out of this as soon as you like, Ikey.

IKEY (*rubbing his stomach*). My, I t'ought a mule kicked me. I gif him one for dat someday or my name ain't Levin-sky. (*Turns upstage.*)

Enter DESMOND, LAURA and HARTLEY from house R. LAURA and HARTLEY stand on veranda, while DESMOND comes down steps and stands near by. JAMIESON stands further up R. watching others.

DESMOND (*to LAURA*). I must thank you for your hospitality, Miss Hartley. I regret that urgent business forces me to bid you good evening so early.

LAURA (*going to C. with DESMOND*). I shall see you oftener, then, Mr. Desmond?

DESMOND. With your permission, every day. (*They confer C.*)

JAMIESON (*aside*). That does not meet with my view. I may as well spring my mine now. (*Goes C. to LAURA.*) May I have a word with you in private, Miss Hartley?

LAURA (*starts*). In private? You may speak here and now. What is it?

JAMIESON (*casting malignant glance at DESMOND*). I prefer not to speak in the presence of this fellow.

DESMOND (*starts*). Sir!

LAURA. Mr. Desmond is my friend—a friend of my father's. Yet you dare to insult him in my presence.

DESMOND. He shall answer to me, never fear.

HARTLEY (*coming C.*). Let us have no quarreling here, gentlemen.

JAMIESON. I seek no quarrel with that man.

Enter MARY from house R. She stands on veranda and watches. A moment later, enter LUCY. She also stands on veranda and watches.

LAURA. Are you afraid to mention Mr. Desmond by name?

JAMIESON. I know no Mr. Desmond.

LAURA (*starts*). Oh!

DESMOND (*threateningly*). You shall know more of him later, to your cost!

JAMIESON. I wish to warn you, Miss Hartley, against this individual in whom you seem strangely interested.

LAURA. Explain yourself, Mr. Jamieson.

JAMIESON. You probably are not aware that this man whom you have honored with your friendship, bears an assumed name! (*ALL show great interest.*)

LAURA (*horrified*). An assumed name! (*To DESMOND.*) You hear what he says? Speak! Does he speak the truth?

DESMOND (*confused*). I—I—I decline to answer any charge brought against me by such a scoundrel as this!

JAMIESON (*laughingly*). A heroic answer, but he convicts himself. I repeat, Desmond is not this man's name. Ask him why he does not bear his father's name.

LAURA (*to DESMOND*). You do not deny it? Then it must be true. You are not Mr. Desmond then?

HARTLEY (*to DESMOND*). Tell her Jamieson lies.

DESMOND (*pleadingly*). There are reasons why I cannot give you an answer now, Miss Hartley.

JAMIESON (*triumphantly*). He admits the truth.

LAURA (*hides her face in her hands*). Oh, the horror of it! You bear an assumed name and refuse to say why. (*She turns from DESMOND when he turns to her.*)

DESMOND (*at C.*). I cannot answer you now, but when you know all, you will at least realize that I am a man of honor. Farewell! (*DESMOND turns proudly up L. Laura looks at him appealingly for a moment, then turns sadly to house and goes up steps, exiting with a gesture of despair. IKEY stands up L., near DESMOND, while HARTLEY is down R. MARY and LUCY follow LAURA into house at—*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE: DESMOND's *apartment*, two weeks later, in 3. Practical door *R. U. E.*, *L. 2 E.* and *C.* in *F.* Window *R. C. in F.*, showing garden outside. Sideboard and glasses and decanter, to *R. of C. D.* Fireplace, with mantle, *R. 2 E.* Table and two chairs in front of fireplace. Sofa, *L. C.* Rugs on floor. Room should have a *cosy* appearance, though plainly furnished. Books and papers on table. See Scene Plot for stage setting.

At rise, JENKINS knocks at C. D. several times, then, after a moment, he opens door and looks in without showing his body.

JENKINS (*looking about*). Anybody to hum? By Hek it don't seem like it. (*He enters and comes down C.*) Guess I'm the only thing that lives and breathes here, unless it be a cat, and I don't see none. Wonder ef Desmond's got back? I wonder if that's his name? Ikey says they had a right smart talk about his name at the Hartley place two weeks ago, and since Desmond went away I've noticed quite a change in Miss Laura. By sassafras! If she don't love Desmond, then I don't know how to read human natur'. (*Examines books on table.*)

Enter IKEY, C. D. *He comes down C.*

IKEY (*to JENKINS*). How you do, Mr. Jenkins?

JENKINS. You're jist the critter I want to bump against, Ikey. How about them Berkshire hogs I sold you Saturday?

IKEY (*shows virtuous surprise*). You sell me hogs last Saturday—me?

JENKINS. By ginger! Air ye goin' to deny it?

IKEY. Me, Ikey Levinsky, buy hogs on Saturday. Oh, you vas a blasphemer.

JENKINS (*consulting note book*). Them hogs weighed jist \$60, and by hek you air goin' to pay me instanter!

IKEY (*takes JENKINS by arm and leads him, C., confidentially*). I vant to tell you a secret.

JENKINS. A secret!

IKEY. Und you promise never, never to give it away?

JENKINS. I aint in the habit of giving things away, Ikey.

IKEY (*looking about mysteriously and then whispering*). You vont tell nobody?

JENKINS. Not a soul, by chowder!

IKEY (*in tragic whisper*). Vell, I am a Jew.

JENKINS. By ginger! I wouldn't hev known it ef you hedn't told me.

IKEY. Und you say dat I, a Jew, bought hogs from you on Saturday?

JENKINS. That's what you did, and by gosh you be goin' to pay me now or get a thrashin'! (*Squares off before IKEY*.)

IKEY (*takes money from pocket*). I gif you \$60 because you are rich und don't need it. (*Gives money to JENKINS*.)

JENKINS (*takes money*). By hek! You aint such a fool as you look, Ikey.

IKEY. Remember, I bought dose hogs on a Tuesday.

JENKINS (*laughs*). He! He! You kin make it Sunday. Don't cut any ice with me which day 'twus.

IKEY. Now, I vants to ask you a questions.

JENKINS. Shoot it out, Ikey.

IKEY. How many summers—no, schwallows make a summer?

JENKINS. That's a new one on me, 'by sassafras! Don't know, Ikey.

IKEY. I don't know neider, but I know one good punch in de collar plexibus makes a good fall. (*He strikes at JENKINS, who evades blow and knocks him down.*)

JENKINS. He! He! Thought you'd do me with your gol darned joke that time, eh?

IKEY (*sitting on floor C.*). You did not gif me de right answer.

JENKINS. By sody! I gave you a left hook. I kin give you one with the right, ef yeou be hankerin' arter more exercise.

Enter LUCY, C. D. *She stands at door and watches for a moment.*

IKEY (*rising*). De right answer vas dat one Dakota grasshopper makes a good many jumps. So (*He jumps to L.*)

LUCY (*coming laughingly down C.*). I see Ikey has got 'em again. What's the matter, Ikey?

IKEY (*confused*). I vas only practicing for a jumping race at de picnic.

LUCY (*going to table, R. C.*). Looked to me like it was jumping hurdles.

JENKINS (*at L. C.*). He! He! Sack race, you mean. What be you doin' here, Lucy?

LUCY. Lookin' for Desmond. Haint he here?

JENKINS. Don't 'pear like it. Jist heerd in the street that he come back.

IKEY. Sure, he come back. I saw him at de train, und he say he come home soon.

LUCY (*sits on sofa, L. C.*). Then I plant myself here until he comes, fur I've got a letter fur him. (*Produces letter from belt.*) It's from Aunt Mary.

JENKINS (*starts*). Mary Ann writin' to Desmond. By chowder! He ain't goin' to cut me out, I reckon.

LUCY (*laughingly*). She aint sweet on him, Uncle Jeb. You've got the inside track on him in that quarter.

JENKINS. D'ye mean it, Lucy? Yeou aint foolin'?

LUCY. She's always talkin' about you, Uncle Jeb. She thinks you're a great catch.

JENKINS (*struts about pleased*). Wall, there be many worse than I be, by beeswax!

LUCY. She's coming down here in a few minutes with Miss Laura to see Desmond. You'd better take my tip and make hay while the sun shines.

JENKINS. Thet's what we do in South Dakota! I've got to go to the store and see about them things fur my new barn. (*Goes to C. D.*)

LUCY. Don't stay away long, Uncle Jeb.

JENKINS (*opens door C.*). I'll be gone five minutes. (*He turns and bumps into JAMIESON, who is just entering—to JAMIESON.*) Oh, it's you, Jamieson. I didn't cal'late to run ag'in a skunk so early in the mornin'.

JAMIESON (*sternly*). Be careful how you address your betters, Mr. Jenkins.

JENKINS. I will when I meet 'em, by sassafras! (*Exit C. D.*)

JAMIESON (*aside*). The insolent wretch! (*Turns down C. and sees others.*) Why, here's Lucy and Levinsky, too. I was not aware that Desmond's room was the meeting place for every chance wanderer in South Dakota. (*Goes to table R. C.*)

LUCY. If I had known you were coming I'd have stayed away. I'm awful careful of the company I'm in.

IKEY (*behind Lucy at sofa*). Me too, Jamieson.

JAMIESON (*irritated*). You are complimentary. Well, children must have their amusement.

LUCY (*going to mantle R. 2 E., and putting letter thereon*). I'll leave this for Mr. Desmond. I've got to get some fresh air. Come along, Ikey. It's too close in here now. (*Goes to C. D.*)

IKEY (*following Lucy to C. D.*). Sure, Jamieson gives me de headache. (*LUCY and IKEY make faces at JAMIESON, and at a threatening move of his, both exit C. D. in F.*)

JAMIESON (*alone*). Bah, when my plans mature and Laura Hartley becomes my wife, I can well afford to laugh at this riffraff which now finds me objectionable. I wonder

what Desmond's trip was about, and what he accomplished? I thought I had spiked his guns as far as Laura is concerned, but my battle, it appears, is only half won. I must have an understanding with Desmond. If he agrees to my demands all will be well. Should he refuse, then it is war to the death between us. (*Goes to mantle and looks at letter.*) A letter for Desmond. It is the handwriting of Mary Ann Hartley. What can she be writing to Desmond about?

Enter DESMOND, R. U. E. He carries a suitcase and long coat. He puts case down near sideboard, removes his gloves, sighs, takes drink at sideboard, then turn down R. JAMIESON, on seeing him, hastily returns letter to its place on the mantle and crosses to C.

DESMOND (*to JAMIESON*). You received my telegram, it seems.

JAMIESON. If you refer to your wire requesting me to meet you here, yes.

DESMOND (*pointing to chair L. at table*). Be seated.

JAMIESON (*sitting down L. at table*). Thank you.

DESMOND (*turning to mantle, sees letter, takes it up*). A letter for me! Who could have left it?

JAMIESON (*looking at a book*). Lucy Ames, I believe. She left here a moment before your arrival.

DESMOND. I came up by the rear staircase so as to avoid encountering my old friends should there be any left, thanks to you. Have I your permission to read my letter?

JAMIESON. You are facetious, Mr. Desmond.

DESMOND (*goes C., opens letter and reads*). Mr. Desmond —Laura has persuaded me to accompany her on a trip to the town today, and it possible you and she may meet. I tell you confidentially, she does not ascribe terrible motives to you, even if you are living under an alias. Offer her some sort of explanation, my friend, and be assured, not only of her good will, but respect. Mary Ann Hartley. (*Puts letter in pocket—aside.*) Thank God! Laura does not ascribe terrible motives to me for living under an alias. And yet, how can I tell her the truth? (*Goes to R. of table and sits in chair—to JAMIESON.*) Now to business, Jamieson.

JAMIESON. I am at your service, Desmond.

DESMOND (*coldly*). It is time you and I understand each other. I take it, we are enemies, eh?

JAMIESON. I aim to be your friend—

DESMOND (*interrupting*). You merely juggle with words, Jamieson. I'd rather be a convict than own friendship with a rascal like you.

JAMIESON (*angrily*). I did not come here to be insulted by you, Desmond.

DESMOND. And yet you did not hesitate to insult me publicly at Mr. Hartley's house two weeks ago. I am a man of plain speech, but I have no irons in the fire, nor do I wear a hypocritical mask like you.

JAMIESON (*sarcastically*). I presume there is no hypocrisy in living under an alias as you do, Desmond.

DESMOND. It is the motive that marks the degree of hypocrisy, and in my case, it is forced upon me, not because of my own act, but because of the act of another. Nay, do not interrupt me. By some trick, you secured information regarding me and my family, which I fondly hoped was buried and would soon be forgotten. You have used that information, however basely acquired it may have been, to degrade me in the estimation of the woman I love.

JAMIESON. You refer to Laura Hartley?

DESMOND. To whom else should I refer?

JAMIESON. I too, love Laura Hartley, as ardently as yourself.

DESMOND (*scornfully*). You love a pure woman! It is a sacrilege!

JAMIESON. I have the right to love as well as yourself. I am a jealous man and I employ the best weapons at hand to aid my suit.

DESMOND. The man of honor who has a rival in love, employs honorable methods to win the woman of his choice. He would die rather than descend to base trickery as you did two weeks ago.

JAMIESON. I told the truth and you know it.

DESMOND. You mean you distorted it to serve your purpose.

JAMIESON. I said your name of Desmond was assumed. Is that true?

DESMOND. I admit nothing to you, Jamieson.

JAMIESON. I said also, you dared not reveal your purpose in assuming an alias. Did I speak the truth?

DESMOND. I decline to answer. I am not on trial, I believe.

JAMIESON. You evade the issue admirably, Desmond. I think you and I stand on the same level.

DESMOND. You think so, Jamieson? We shall see. I think I know why you maligned me before the Hartleys the other day. (*After a pause.*) It was to shoulder me with the responsibility of the theft of Mr. Hartley's papers, of which crime, I fancy, you know more than you are willing to admit.

JAMIESON (*laughingly*). You are a humorist, Desmond.

DESMOND. Aye, but you may not think so before you are a month older. I shall prove you not only a blackguard, but a thief as well, Jamieson.

JAMIESON (*annoyed*). Let us get down to business, Desmond.

DESMOND. I am getting down to it rapidly, I assure you. I give you three days to settle up your affairs and leave the state.

JAMIESON. Bah! You speak childishly.

DESMOND. Perhaps so, but wait. I have been out of town for two weeks, and I have collected enough evidence of wrongdoing on your part to hang you out of hand. If you are wise, you will depart without delay.

JAMIESON. Now, let me have my say, Desmond. I say Desmond, knowing that is not your real name. I will give you three days in which to leave this place or stand exposed before all the world.

DESMOND. Indeed! Are there any conditions attached to your demand?

JAMIESON. You may remain here as long as you like and retain your office of Town Marshal on condition that you give up Laura Hartley and never speak to her again.

Enter LAURA, C. D. in F. She stands at door unobserved and watches.

DESMOND. You demand that I shall never speak to Laura Hartley again? (*Picks up a glove and toys with it as he leans further across the table and faces JAMIESON.*)

JAMIESON. I demand it! Your answer?

DESMOND (*slapping JAMIESON's face with glove*). That is my answer, you hound!

JAMIESON (*springing up and half drawing revolver*). I'll have your life for this!

DESMOND (*moving to C. and disarming him*). Not this time, Jamieson. I've met chaps like you before.

LAURA (*coming down C.*). What does this mean, gentlemen? Weapons drawn, and for what?

DESMOND (*laughingly*). Mr. Jamieson was merely rehearsing a part of a villain he is to portray at an amateur performance.

JAMIESON. I—I think that is right, Miss Hartley.

LAURA (*looking from one to the other puzzled*). I do not understand.

JAMIESON. Mr. Desmond has my permission to enlighten you. For the present, I beg to excuse myself.

DESMOND. That is an entirely useless formality, Jamieson.

JAMIESON (*aside to DESMOND C.*). He laughs best who laughs last. I shall return, and when I do, I'll play my trump card.

DESMOND. See that you don't take it out of your sleeve, Jamieson. Play the game squarely. (*Turns to LAURA, who seats herself on sofa L. C.*)

JAMIESON (*aside as he goes to C. D.*). He wants war, and he shall have it. (*Exit C. D.*)

Enter MARY and JENKINS, C. D. in F.

JENKINS. There's Jamieson again. By hek! I'd like to poison him.

MARY. What an odious person. He sends a shiver through me every time I see him.

DESMOND. He is harmless, Aunt Mary.

JENKINS. He's like Bill Baker's toothless dog, Chowder, all bark and no bite.

MARY (*to LAURA*). Nice way to treat your chaperons, Laura. You left me quite in the lurch.

LAURA. While you stood in the garden awaiting Uncle Jeb, I walked on and at the door heard loud and angry voices. I opened it without knocking and entered just in time to see Mr. Desmond disarm Mr. Jamieson, who wanted to shoot him.

MARY. Gracious me! Jamieson wanted to shoot Mr. Desmond?

DESMOND (*at C.*). It was a trifling matter, ladies, so pray dismiss it from your minds. Now that you are here it is proper that I make the explanation as to myself, which is your due, and which I hope will serve to exculpate me from the taint of wrongdoing.

JENKINS (*taking his hand*). By ginger! You don't need to sculp yourself on my account, Desmond. You're true blue and I'll bet my bottom dollar on it.

DESMOND. Thank you. Uncle Jeb. I shall make my statement and throw myself upon the mercy of the ladies.

MARY. Gracious me! Are you going to confess to something horrible? (*sits on sofa L. C.*)

LAURA (*sitting on sofa beside MARY*). Don't be frightened, Aunt Mary. (*Turns to Desmond, who stands C.*) I owe an apology to Mr. Desmond for thrusting myself upon him in this unwarranted manner.

DESMOND. No apology in needed, Miss Hartley. (*After a pause.*) Painful as it is to me to admit it—Jamieson told the truth—I bear a false name.

LAURA (*sighs*). Ah!

JENKINS (*near mantle, R. 2 E.*). By sassafras! I don't believe it yet!

MARY. You have a reason for this no doubt, Mr. Desmond, and a good one, too.

DESMOND. My father was a private secretary in the employ of the manager of a large concern in the East for many years prior to five years ago. We lived happily together until one day my father was arrested for forgery.

LAURA. Forgery!

DESMOND. He was tried, and despite his solemn asseverations of innocence, he was convicted and sentenced to a term of five years in the penitentiary.

MARY. How dreadful!

JENKINS. By beeswax! There be a lot of them fellows still outside the pen.

DESMOND. My father suffered for another—he himself was guiltless.

LAURA. Horrible!

DESMOND. In the course of his duties as secretary, my father signed documents of every description for his superior officer, who dabbled in the barter of stocks at the exchange. A rapidly-falling market made it necessary for him to raise funds to secure himself against extinction. He thought of my father and made him his victim.

JENKINS. That fellow ought to be shanghaied, by sody!

DESMOND. Among the papers sent to my father to be signed was a forged check presumably signed by the president of the concern, and made payable to my father. The sum was \$100,000. Without looking at the face of the check, my father indorsed it and the money was drawn from the bank. The manager took the money and sailed for Europe, leaving my father to bear the brunt of the storm.

LAURA. How wicked.

JENKINS. Wicked? 'Taint strong enough. It was a goldarned shame!

DESMOND. My father was arrested as a confederate. His story was derided in court by the lawyers and his pleas of innocence laughed at as being childish inventions. He was convicted and sentenced to prison. I followed him to the door of his cell, and the look of horror and despair on his face well nigh drove me mad. (*Goes to table and sits L.*)

LAURA (*going to DESMOND at table*). I pity you sincerely, Mr. Desmond.

JENKINS (*freely using a red bandana handkerchief*). By chowder! I don't want Mary Ann to see me blubberin' like a bull yearling.

DESMOND. I visited him weekly for two years, then went West and landed in South Dakota. I adopted my mother's name and have been known so ever since.

LAURA. And what became of your father?

DESMOND. Soon after my election as Town Marshal a year ago, I wrote him of my adoption of my mother's maiden name, but I neglected to inform him of my permanent address. About six months ago, having business in the East, I made inquiries regarding my father and found that he had been released from prison and gone West. I searched for him everywhere, but could find no trace of him.

LAURA. How did Jamieson learn that you bore an assumed name?

DESMOND. I cannot tell. I trust you will pardon this shameful disclosure, Miss Hartley.

LAURA. I honor you the more for the confidence you have reposed in my aunt and myself. If you will permit us to aid you in your search for your father, we shall do all in our power to render it successful.

MARY (*on sofa L. C.*). Laura voices my sentiments, Mr. Desmond.

JENKINS. And mine too, by Hek!

MARY (*rising suddenly*). Good gracious!

LAURA. What's the matter, Aunt Mary?

MARY. I left my purse lying on the counter of that dry-goods store we visited just before we came here.

LAURA. I shall go after it at once. Remain here, Aunt Mary, until I return.

MARY. That is very good of you, Laura. Pray return quickly. I have samples of ribbon in that purse I would not lose for the world.

JENKINS (*to MARY*). How much money hev yeou in that purse?

MARY. Sixty cents.

JENKINS. By chowder! If you lose that you lose a right smart pile of dust.

DESMOND. I should be pleased to accompany Miss Hartley to the store as it is on the way to my office.

LAURA. I certainly have no objection, Mr. Desmond.

JENKINS (*aside, at table, to DESMOND, while LAURA and MARY confer at sofa L. C.*). Don't you hurry back, Desmond. (*Pointing to MARY.*) I've got a important deal to pull off afore yeou arrive, so look fur that purse anywhere but the right place. I'll make that sixty cents good.

DESMOND (*laughingly*). But how about those ribbon samples?

JENKINS. I'll get her another bunch if I hev to buy out the Golden Rule store.

LAURA (*going to C. D.*). I am ready, Mr. Desmond. Good bye, Aunt Mary.

MARY (*looking over newspaper at sofa*). Return quickly, Laura. (*Exit LAURA, followed by DESMOND C. D. JENKINS looks at fastening of door, then looks at MARY and comes down C. He shows he is worried, yet eager to carry out his purpose.*)

JENKINS (*at table—aside*). By ginger! I'll spring it onto her now, if it cost me a leg! Yeou kin most allus get a female critter fust pop, ef yeou do it sudden like. (*Moves toward L. C. slowly and halts.*) Nothin' to be skeered about, Jeb Jenkins. You've done the same thing a good meny times afore and she's only an old maid, ready and willin' fur a chance to say the word. By gum! I hain't been a allfired skeery sence I wus held up at Pine Valley and robbed of my silver watch and jackknife. I'm ashamed of you, Jeb Jenkins, to be skeered at your time of life, past sixty-three. (*He makes wide detour of sofa and gets behind it—to MARY.*) Miss Mary Ann Hartley, I'm here.

MARY (*utters sharp cry*). My, how you startled me, Mr. Jenkins.

JENKINS. I thought 'twas a mouse—

MARY (*rising and jumping upon sofa with her skirts elevated*). A mouse! Where?

JENKINS. I didn't say 'twas a mouse, but that I thought it might hev been one, to make you yell like a Comanche Indian. Set down, Mary Ann. Lucky fur you no one but me saw yeou dancing on that sofa jist now.

MARY (*getting down from sofa and sitting*). You dare

to call me Mary Ann? You are offensively familiar, Mr. Jenkins.

JENKINS. By beeswax! It's a habit of mine, and ye'll hev to git used to it like the measles I didn't know Mrs. Jeb Jenkins No. 2 three hours afore I called her 'Mandy.

MARY. What has Mrs. Jeb Jenkins No. 2 to do with me, sir?

JENKINS. I hope not much, Mary Ann. She's been an angel for the past four years now.

MARY. An angel!

JENKINS. I reckon so if old St. Peter allowed her to slip by him. By Gum! She had a tongue as sharp as a grass cutter—

MARY (*interrupting*). Jeb Jenkins, if you think I am going to listen to your eulogies of your wives, you are in error.

JENKINS. I jest wanted to tell yeou that I suffered considerable in the matrimonial line and am willin' to do some more sufferin' if yeou say the word.

MARY. What do you mean, Jeb Jenkins?

JENKINS. Don't call me Jeb Jenkins in that tone. Call me Jeb, my ducky.

MARY (*rising and walking about horrified*). Call him Jeb, my ducky! What is the world coming to? (*Indignantly*.) Jeb, my ducky!

JENKINS. That's more like it, Mary Ann. We'll hitch all right.

MARY. Hitch!

JENKINS. Sure; get spliced. Trot in double harness down the avenoos of life. Call on the parson at the old meetin' house in the hollow, then dance a hoedown in the barn arterwards. Hoopee! There's life in old Jeb Jenkins yet, be gosh! (*He struts around, MARY looking at him in surprise*.)

MARY. Are you insane, Mr. Jenkins?

JENKINS. Uncle Jeb Jenkins crazy? Not by a jugfull. A little foolish mebbe, fur taking another matrimonial risk at his time of life, but always willin' to take any reasonable chance. Look at this figure. (*Turns himself about before MARY*.) Look at that leg? See them socks? 'Mandy knit

'em three years afore she died. She was a holy terror at knittin' socks. If she wasn't talkin', she was knittin' something or other.

MARY (*aside*). Shall I call for help? (*To JENKINS.*) What are you talking about?

JENKINS. Stop your kidding and let's get down to business, Mary Ann. I want yeou to marry me as quick as the Lord'll let you do it, by ginger!

MARY (*amazed*). Marry you! How sudden! (*She staggers as if about to faint.*)

JENKINS (*assisting her*). By gum! 'Mandy said the same thing arter I had talked to her fur an hour. Won't we make the widder Brown and tother neighbors at the Hollow look sick when we go into the meetin' house behind the hearse.

MARY. Hearse?

Enter LUCY and IKEY, C. D. in F. They stand upstage and watch.

JENKINS By ginger! I meant the wedding kerridge. It don't matter, though, 'cause weddings often are like funerals fur the contracting parties. You and me will have great times together, Mary Ann.

MARY. And you will let me have my own way always, Jeb?

JENKINS. You do the chores and make all the cranberry pies I kin eat, and yeou don't hear no kick from me. I've got a 2,000-acre farm in wheat, thirty bushel to the acre, 300 head of stock and \$16,000 in the South Dakoty bank. It's all yourn fur the asking, providin' yeou take me with it.

MARY (*embracing him*). I'll take you, Jebby dear.

LUCY (*upstage C.*). Oh, Aunt Mary Ann Hartley, I'm ashamed. (*Turns away.*)

MARY (*breaks away from JENKINS*): We're observed, Jeb.

IKEY (*averting his face from them*). Don't mind me, 'cause I ain't got any eyes in de back of my head.

JENKINS. I don't care who knows it, Mary Ann. I'm going down to the county clerk and git the license.

MARY (*restraining JENKINS C.*). Not yet, Jeb. There's plenty of time.

JENKINS. Plenty of time, by gosh! I guess not. I'm sixty-three and yeou ain't much of a length behind. Let's pick out the trosser.

MARY. You mean the bridal trousseau?

JENKINS. Sure, the street sweeper, yeou know.

MARY. When we are married, Jeb, I shall teach you a few things.

JENKINS. It's a go, by sody! I'm like Bill Smith's bull pup, willin' to learn a few tricks. (*Exeunt JENKINS and MARY C. D.*)

LUCY (*at C. D.—to IKEY*). Guess I'll go and spread the glad tidings, Ikey.

IKEY. Vat is tidings? We need a rope for dat, don't we?

LUCY. If you don't learn the English language soon, I'll break off our engagement.

IKEY. Learn de English language? For vy? I can count my money in bad English just as well as in good.

LUCY. All right, Ikey, you've got to have lots of money before you will be able to spread the news of our engagement. Come along. (*Exeunt LUCY and IKEY C. D.*)

Enter JAMIESON R. U. E. He looks about and finds himself alone. Goes down to table R. C.

JAMIESON (*solus*). I'll play my last card and stake my all upon its success! To revenge myself upon Desmond I must contrive to have him meet Torrance and then—ah! how I'd like to be there to enjoy his discomfiture. I shall expose Torrance as an impostor and force him to shoulder the crime of the theft of the papers. When Laura learns the truth, she will loathe Desmond, and the roadway to her heart will be clear for me. I will marry her even though I ruin Desmond and his family. No one will believe Torrance as against me, so that I am safe in that regard. If Clancy keeps faith with me, I'll have nothing to worry me more.

Enter HARTLEY and DESMOND C. D. in F.

JAMIESON (*sees them and turns to mantle—aside*). Now for the storm, Desmond. Beware it does not swallow you!

DESMOND (*coming to table—to JAMIESON*). You here again, Jamieson! Let me inform you for the last time that your presence in my apartment is distasteful to me.

JAMIESON. If I may have a word with Mr. Hartley, I shall take pleasure in quitting this place forever.

HARTLEY. Eh? What do you want of me, Jamieson? Speak quickly and have done with it.

JAMIESON. I have learned that Torrance, the man we believed to be Bothman, and to whom you issued that agreement on payment of \$10,000 two weeks ago, is an impostor.

HARTLEY. An impostor! Who the devil is he?

JAMIESON. That is for the officers of the law to discover, not me. Perhaps Mr. Desmond, as the Town Marshal, will undertake the task.

HARTLEY. He shall do it and bring this impostor and his accomplices to justice.

DESMOND. It shall be done, Mr. Hartley. No guilty man shall escape now that Clancy has made a partial confession.

JAMIESON (*starts*). What has Clancy to do with the affair?

DESMOND. He merely gave valuable documents to one Torrance at your command. So this man Torrance, then, was merely your tool in securing this agreement for the sale of 600,000 acres of land at hardly one-half of its market price?

JAMIESON. It's a lie!

HARTLEY. Someone is back of this impostor who holds my agreement. Who is he?

Enter LAURA C. D. in F. She stands at door and watches others.

DESMOND. That is not the question at this time, Mr. Hartley. We must find Torrance and learn the truth from him.

JAMIESON. Quite right, Desmond. Torrance has a record as a convict—

DESMOND (*starts visibly*). A convict!

JAMIESON. He says he knows you, Desmond.

DESMOND. It is untrue. I know no man of that name.

JAMIESON. In a maudlin statement made to me just before his departure for Pine Valley, Torrance charged that you had instigated the theft of Mr. Hartley's papers.

DESMOND (*after a pause*). I don't know why I do not kill you where you stand.

LAURA (*coming down C.*). It is time the truth be revealed.

JAMIESON. Let Desmond arrest Torrance and the truth will be revealed.

LAURA. Mr. Desmond will do his sworn duty as an officer of the law. Let him capture Torrance and we will see if you dare to repeat your statement in his presence.

HARTLEY. Where in Pine Valley is Torrance?

JAMIESON. At Hill's dugout.

DESMOND. I shall be there before nightfall.

LAURA (*to DESMOND*). You say you never have met this man Torrance?

DESMOND. I swear it upon my honor.

LAURA. I believe you, Mr. Desmond.

HARTLEY. Someone is lying. Which is it? Until this matter is finally adjusted and the truth established, I shall speak to neither of you again.

JAMIESON. Bring Torrance and Desmond face to face and then see who lies.

DESMOND. We shall be brought face to face! If Torrance lives he shall reveal the truth. I'm off for Pine Valley without delay. (*Takes up hat and gloves.*)

JAMIESON (*laughingly, aside*). I hope he may relish the meeting.

LAURA. My faith in you remains unshaken, Mr. Desmond. May God be with you.

DESMOND (*going to C. D.*). I shall face you tomorrow without shame or I shall have ceased to live. (*DESMOND stands at C. D., his face turned to LAURA, who stands three steps down R. HARTLEY stands before mantle and JAMIESON stands near sofa L. C. until—*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE: *Dugout in Pine Valley, in 3. Rough interior representing logs or plaster, showing cracks in walls, etc. Practical plank door, C. in F., which is reached from outside by two steps leading down to it. Another practical door R. U. E. Plain cupboard R. of C. D. and rough table, with two chairs R. C. Tall screen stands up L. Bunches of vegetables, such as onions or carrots, may be suspended from the logs in ceiling. A plain washstand at L. 2 E. with towel rack beside it. Several cheap chromos are fastened to the walls here and there. See Scene Plot for stage setting.*

At rise door opens and enter JENKINS and IKEY. Both are armed with revolvers, which they hold in front of them warily as they advance to C. Stage is semi-dark and candle is used for illuminating scene.

JENKINS (*looking about*). There ben't nothing about this place to shoot, that I see. Got a match, Ikey?

IKEY. Sure. Here it is. (*Takes match from pocket and gives it to JENKINS.*)

JENKINS (*lighting match*). Any candle about here? Sure, there be one on the table. (*Goes to table R. C., lights candle and stage is lighted.*) By chowder! This be a lonely hole.

IKEY. Vat is dat noise? Jerusalem! It is ghosts! (*He stands close to JENKINS and displays trepidation.*)

JENKINS (*listening*). I hope it ain't 'Mandy's ghost coming to ha'nt me fur proposin' to Mary Ann. I don't hear nothin', Ikey.

IKEY (*listening intently*). Sure, I hear it. Sounds like a man eating a saloon free lunch.

JENKINS (*laughingly*). He, he! It's the wind rattling them bunches of sparrowgrass hangin' to the roof.

IKEY (*putting the muzzle of his revolver against JENKINS' back*). Sure, I knowed it vas dat all de time.

JENKINS (*observes IKEY's revolver against his side and thrusts it aside*). By sassafras! Do yeou want to blow out my gizzard? Take it away?

IKEY (*looking into the muzzle*) Gizzard? Vat is gizzard?

JENKINS. He, he! Did yeou ever eat pork, Ikey?

IKEY. I'm ashamed to tell you, Mr. Jenkins.

JENKINS. I don't blame you, Ikey. Well, you take a hog and put him into a vat.

IKEY. A vat? Vat is a vat?

JENKINS. A vat is a big what-d'ye-call-'em. You know —a— a vat.

IKEY. Sure, I know. It is a vat.

JENKINS. Of course it be. Well, you take the hog, put him in the vat and boil him.

IKEY. Vat a shame to boil de hog when you can roast him.

JENKINS. Right you are, by sassafras! You boil him until yeou kaint see nothin' in the vat.

IKEY (*meditatively*). Nodding left? Yes—yes—?

JENKINS. Wall, what you see then is the gizzard. (*Struts about laughingly*). Score one for Jeb Jenkins, by chowder!

IKEY (*following JENKINS' movements*). Dere's noddings left und dat is de gizzard. I don't see noddings except me here, so you must be a gizzard.

JENKINS. I wonder where Desmond is? He should have been here long ago.

IKEY. Jamieson said Torrance was here in dis place. If I see him, I shoot.

JENKINS. By sassafras! I won't take no chances on bein' shot by him, 'cause I don't want to make Mary Ann a widder afore she's married. Guess I'll go out and have a look for Desmond down the road. (*Goes to C. D.*)

IKEY. I take a look, too. (*He goes to C. D., opens it and looks out*.) Moses! someone is comin'.

JENKINS (*looking off at C. D.*). Who is it, Ikey?

IKEY. It sure is Torrance. I see him mit Jamieson two weeks ago. If he see us he fill us full of paper holes.

JENKINS. He may be full of fight. All them fellers who do crooked work like him love to fight better'n to eat. We'll hev to hide and make a rush for it when the opportunity offers. (*Both come down C. and look about.*)

IKEY. Sure, if he only hits me in the gizzard, I don't care.

JENKINS (*sees screen*). Here we be. Git behind this screen and don't open your jaw or I'll ram my gun down yer throat, be gosh! (*Both hide behind screen L.*)

Enter TORRANCE C. D. He stops at door and listens with a look of terror in his face. Shuts door carefully after him.

TORRANCE (*as he listens*). I'm sure there are pursuers on my trail. I saw tracks in the sand near this door and there were several horsemen on the prairie as I rode up. I am a hunted man and if need be I shall know how to die. (*Goes to table, sees lighted candle and starts.*) Someone must have been here, for the candle is burning. Who can it be? (*Looks about.*) It is Jamieson whom I can thank for heapin' this trouble upon me. Curse him! But for him I should not now be hunted like a wild beast, a prey to ceaseless fear.

IKEY (*in subdued voice behind screen*). Ouch!

TORRANCE (*starts*). What was that? (*Draws revolver and stands C. in listening attitude.*) Pshaw! I am frightened at shadows and start at every sound. I must have food and then I'm off for the west. (*Exit R. U. E.*)

JENKINS (*looks behind screen from upper end*). He's gone, by gravy!

IKEY (*looking out from behind other end of screen*). I be gone soon, too. (*Goes to C. D.*) Good-bye, Jenkins.

JENKINS (*going toward C. D.*). Where be yeou goin', Ikey?

IKEY. To look for dem gizzards. (*Exit C. D.*)

JENKINS. Wall, I don't want nothin' to do with a desperate character like Torrance, so I'll vamoose too. (*Exit C. D.*)

Enter TORRANCE R. U. E. He stands at door and listens.

TORRANCE. I thought I heard voices, but I must have been mistaken. There is no one here. (*Goes to C. D.*) I have little time to lose if I would hope to make good my escape. I felt it all along that Jamieson would betray me to Hartley if that were necessary to aid his plans. (*Opens door and looks off, then closes it again.*) There are men at the stable and they are coming this way. I must hide and when the opportunity presents itself, make a dash for liberty. (*Goes to R. U. E.*) Come what may, I shall never submit to arrest. (*Exit R. U. E.*)

Enter JAMIESON and HARTLEY, C. D

HARTLEY (*as he comes down C.*). There is no one here. You must have been mistaken in your man Torrance—this impostor.

JAMIESON (*relighting candle on table*). He was to have met me here. That's all I know, Mr Hartley.

HARTLEY. Strange that Desmond is not here. He was en route before we left town.

JAMIESON. He may never come. I do not trust that man.

HARTLEY (*laughingly*). I'm sure he despises you, Jamieson. What was your purpose in having me drag Laura to this God forsaken spot?

JAMIESON. To prove to you both that Desmond is not the man Laura thinks him to be and to prevent her from forming an affection for a man who is unworthy of her.

HARTLEY. You are damnable solicitous about my daughter's welfare, Jamieson. I wish you had been as solicitous in my land affair and saved me all this annoyance of dealing with an impostor.

JAMIESON. I am interested in your daughter's welfare because—because I love her.

HARTLEY. You love her!

JAMIESON. With all my soul!

HARTLEY. Have you told her of your love?

JAMIESON. I have. She replied that she would wed no man without your consent.

HARTLEY. She's a dutiful daughter. And you now ask my leave to woo her?

JAMIESON. Grant me this and I shall know how to reach Laura's heart.

HARTLEY. Until you clear yourself of suspicion cast upon you by Clancy in the matter of the rifling of my safe, I withhold my consent.

JAMIESON. That is a tale concocted by Desmond to further his own schemes. Let Torrance face him and my innocence will be established.

HARTLEY (*going to C. D.*). I'll have to rejoin Laura now, or she'll be restless. (*Looks off.*) There is Desmond now. He must not know that Laura and I followed him. (*Exit C. D.*)

JAMIESON (*going to R. U. E.*). There is someone in this room. It must be Torrance. Well, I hope his meeting with Desmond may be a joyful one. (*Exit C. D.*)

Enter TORRANCE R. U. E. He goes to C. D. and looks off.

TORRANCE. Escape is cut off now. I am cornered like a rat. (*Closes door and goes to table.*) Jamieson loves Laura Hartley! No, a scoundrel like him cannot love truly. (*Staggers and falls into chair at R. of table.*) Another attack! The prison physician warned me that apoplexy would carry me off some day. Would it had come now and I know misery no more! I am overcome by a strange lethargy. The thought of liberty no longer stirs me. I care not whether I live or die! (*He falls weeping upon table, his head hidden in his arms.*)

Enter DESMOND C. D. He carries revolver in his right hand. He closes door silently and then comes down L., looking cautiously about.

DESMOND (*aside, L. C.*). Jenkins and Ikey both assert they saw Torrance, so he must be here. (*Turns to table and sees TORRANCE. He steps softly to table and points revolver at TORRANCE.*) Hands up!

TORRANCE (*makes no move*).

DESMOND (*sternly*). Hands up, I say!

TORRANCE (*starts, then raises his head*). That voice!
(To DESMOND.) Who are you?

DESMOND (*stepping back towards C., his revolver still pointed at TORRANCE*.) You are my prisoner, Torrance. Up with your hands, or I fire!

TORRANCE (*rises, then comes forward with outstretched arms*). My son!

DESMOND (*bewildered*). Your son! (*Looks into TORRANCE'S face*.) Father! (*They fall into each other's arms*.)

TORRANCE (*tearfully, after a pause*). My poor boy! To think we should meet thus.

DESMOND (*leading TORRANCE to table*). It is inconceivable. Let me think. Be seated, father.

TORRANCE (*sitting R. at table*). Harold—

DESMOND (*interrupting*). Silence, father! Not a word until I bid you speak. So you—you are Torrance, alias Bothman—my God!

TORRANCE (*in anguish*). You know the truth and yet you do not revile me!

DESMOND. Revile you? Impossible!

TORRANCE. Heaven is merciful indeed!

DESMOND. My mind is clearer now, father. You are a fugitive from justice. I, your son, the officer of the law with a warrant for your arrest on a charge of impersonating another in furtherance of a fraudulent transaction.

TORRANCE. It is inexorable fate, my boy.

DESMOND. I wonder that I do not go mad! (*Rises and walks R. and L. in agony*.) What have I done that I should have fallen victim to such maddening circumstances?

TORRANCE. Have courage, Harold—

DESMOND (*interrupting with cynical laugh as he returns to table*). You say, have courage! Why not pluck this arm from my body and say, "Be comforted, my boy, the member is useless." Why not rob me of my soul and assure me that I am the nobler without that spark of divinity? Have courage! And my heart is bursting! (*Falls weeping at L. of table*.)

TORRANCE (*despairingly*). What may I do to ease your

agony, Harold? Your tears sear my heart like molten metal!

DESMOND (*recovering himself with an effort*). Pardon me, father. Filial love has made a child of me, and I thought myself a man. I forgot myself, but Richard is himself again. Come, tell me all and I shall know how to act. Conceal nothing from me, for I am your son and you can trust me implicitly. How came you to meet this human reptile, Jamieson?

TORRANCE. Six months ago, soon after my release from prison. I had left that institution, crushed, hopeless, despairing, like a man in a dream, shrinking from all I met as some unclean monster, feeling in my heart that all could see upon my brow the brand of my imperishable shame—the damning proof that I was an ex-convict! (*Groans in agony.*)

DESMOND. Poor father!

TORRANCE (*after a pause*). I resolved to face the world bravely, but fearing my name—our name—would involve me in trouble with the police, I assumed that of Torrance and came West, hoping to find you and start life anew.

DESMOND. You were to serve five years, but you actually spent only four years in prison. Am I right?

TORRANCE. I was a model prisoner and my good behavior earned me time credits which shortened my term materially. I did not write to you on my release, because I purposed to surprise you.

DESMOND. But you did not have my address?

TORRANCE. No, but I knew that inquiries at Mitchell would lead to information as to your whereabouts. Unfortunately I did not get to Mitchell and I was wholly ignorant that you were Town Marshal—

DESMOND (*interrupting*). A fatal oversight on your part, father. Proceed.

TORRANCE. I went to South Dakota and secured employment in a stenographer's office. I there met Jamieson one day. He had a divorce suit in court and he employed me to copy certain documents, the nature of which convinced me

that he was not only an unprincipled attorney at law, but a scoundrel at heart.

DESMOND. You were not mistaken, father.

TORRANCE. One day, by some mischance, I dropped a package of papers including the newspaper account of my trial and conviction, your letter informing me that you had assumed your mother's name and other documents which hinted at, if they did not reveal my life's secret. When I discovered my loss I returned in haste to my desk and found the package on the floor, apparently undisturbed.

DESMOND (*interested*). Yes—yes!

TORRANCE. I then remembered I met Jamieson at the door of the office, but was not aware he had found the package, learned my secret and then replaced it where it had fallen, until it was too late.

DESMOND. The rascal!

TORRANCE. Knowing my secret, Jamieson proceeded to utilize it to his own advantage. He sent for me a month ago and informed me that he was interested in a land deal out west with Mr. Hartley and that he required my aid to render it a success.

DESMOND. And so your trouble began.

TORRANCE. I was to go to a clerk in Hartley's employ, a man named Clancy, and secure certain documents which Clancy was to give me. I was not aware until later that these documents were stolen by Clancy, and that by implicating me in the crime Jamieson was assured of my silence and aid in the furtherance of his iniquitous plot to defraud Mr. Hartley out of his land by trickery.

DESMOND. Yes, proceed, father.

TORRANCE. Finding myself involved in the theft of the papers, I fell an easy victim to Jamieson. He forced me to represent myself as Bothman under penalty of exposure, and as such I was introduced to Mr. Hartley two weeks ago. I paid Mr. Hartley \$10,000, which was supplied by Jamieson, and when I produced the agreement which I claimed had been sent me to New York several months previously, Mr. Hartley reluctantly acknowledged receipt of the money. Jamieson took the agreement and is now

negotiating the sale of it to an eastern syndicate at an enormous profit to himself.

DESMOND. What were you to get for your services?

TORRANCE. Five thousand dollars and absolute secrecy as to my career—my shame!

DESMOND. And you believed in that man Jamieson? Poor father!

TORRANCE (*wildly*). From the day I learned Jamieson had fathomed my secret, I was dazed—mad! I pictured to myself day and night what exposure meant to me—ruin irretrievable! The prospect was terrifying to me and like a drowning man who grasps at straws to save himself, I trusted to Jamieson's promises and I sank deeper into the mire! Then I thought of you and the effect my exposure would have upon your career should our relationship be revealed. What else could I do?

DESMOND. I now realize what Jamieson meant when he said that once you and I met, the truth would be revealed. It has been revealed, and how crushingly! But what shall I do now? (*Rising and standing C. in despair.*)

TORRANCE (*rising and going to DESMOND C.*) There is but one thing for you to do. Serve your warrant—arrest me!

DESMOND (*in agony*). No, no!

TORRANCE (*holding out his hands clasped*) See, my hands await your manacles! I am your prisoner!

DESMOND. I cannot—I cannot!

TORRANCE. It is your sworn duty, Harold. Why do you hesitate?

DESMOND. Arrest you? Impossible!

TORRANCE. It must be done, my son. (*Goes to table and picking up revolver, places muzzle to his temple.*) Refuse to do your duty, Harold, and I blow out my brains!

DESMOND (*springing upon TORRANCE and taking revolver from him*). You are mad!

TORRANCE. I urge you to do your duty regardless of the consequences to me.

DESMOND (*after a pause*). Yes, father, I shall do my duty.

TORRANCE (*joyfully*). Spoken like my own brave son!

DESMOND. It lies not in arresting you, but saving you!

TORRANCE. Saving me? Impossible!

DESMOND (*removing his coat and turning upon TORRANCE*). Put on this coat, father. Nay, do not seek to frustrate me, but obey! (*Puts coat on TORRANCE after he has removed his own.*) Now, here are my hat and gloves. Put them on and speedily.

TORRANCE (*as he puts on hat and gloves*). Is it thus you do your duty, Harold?

DESMOND (*earnestly*). I know no duty more imperative than that imposed upon me by filial love! It overrides all human law, laughs at the conventions of society and its complex machinery of government. I would dishonor the stainless memory of my angel mother were I to do aught else than I am doing now!

TORRANCE. Noble boy!

DESMOND (*thrusting TORRANCE toward C. D.*). Away to my room in town and await me there! Hasten! There is no time to be lost if you would hope to escape this fiend. Jamieson. You'll find my horse hitched by the door. Away!

TORRANCE. Farewell, Harold.

DESMOND (*shaking TORRANCE'S hand*). Farewell, father. (*Exit TORRANCE C. D.* DESMOND *pauses at door in listening attitude, then turns down C.*) What shall I say when they face me and demand an explanation? I must think of some plan. I hear footsteps approaching. I dare not face them now. (*Goes to R. U. E.*) I'll hide in this room and recall my scattered wits! (*Exit R. U. E.*)

Enter JAMIESON, HARTLEY, LAURA, JENKINS and IKEY C. D. JAMIESON and HARTLEY go down C, LAURA goes to R. of table R. C., IKEY and JENKINS go down L.

HARTLEY. This is strange indeed. Why did Desmond leave without a word to us if he knew we were at the stable?

JAMIESON (*turning to table and picking up revolver*). Torrance must have been here, for here is his revolver.

LAURA. How do you know it is Mr. Torrance's revolver?

JAMIESON (*confused*). I—I think so.

HARTLEY. It appears to me that you know more about this impostor than you care to admit, Jamieson.

JAMIESON. I scarcely know him—

IKEY. Vat a lie, Jamieson! He vas a good friend of yours.

LAURA (*to IKEY*). If you know anything about this mystery, speak, Ikey.

IKEY (*crossing to table R. C.*). I hear Jamieson and Torrance talking at your house about Mr. Hartley's land and Jamieson tell Torrance he must do vat he say or he vill fix him good.

JAMIESON (*threateningly*). You lie, you dog!

IKEY (*pointing revolver at JAMIESON*). Don't come too close, Jamieson, or I shoot you in de place vere de turkey got de knife.

JAMIESON (*laughing nervously*). I shall not remain here to be insulted without cause. (*Goes to C. D.*)

JENKINS (*at C. D., holds off JAMIESON with revolver*). Yeou can't git out of here Jamieson, until we find out jist who it wuz that left this dugout a minute ago.

LAURA (*to JENKINS*). Do you doubt it was Mr. Desmond who left this place?

JENKINS. I seed gray hair under that hat, Miss Hartley, and if Desmond's got gray hair, I'm a lunatic, by gosh!

LAURA. If that be so, then Mr. Desmond must be here.

HARTLEY. He is not here. We had better return home, Laura.

LAURA. I shall not leave this place until I learn the truth.

Enter DESMOND R. U. E. He stands at door unobserved and listens.

JAMIESON. The truth is plain. Desmond has deserted the field. He is a traitor to his oath of office.

LAURA (*at C.*). I am ready to stake my life upon this one thing—Harold Desmond is no traitor!

JAMIESON (*sarcastically*). He has a noble champion in

you, Miss Hartley. One might almost believe you loved him.

HARTLEY. You are going too far, Jamieson!

LAURA. Let him speak, father. It is for me to answer him and I glory in the opportunity of doing so. (*To JAMIESON.*) I do love Desmond with all my heart! That you have basely maligned him to serve your own ignoble ends, I am firmly convinced. I shall believe him false only when he himself proves it.

JAMIESON (*turns up R., sees DESMOND, starts and turns to others*). Then let him speak for himself!

DESMOND (*coming down C.*). Aye, he shall speak!

ALL (*amazed*). Desmond!

DESMOND. I owe you an apology, my friends.

LAURA (*agitated*). Apology!

DESMOND (*lightly*). Aye, for making you the sport of a farcical proceeding.

LAURA. I begin to understand. Who was that man who left here awhile ago wearing your hat and coat? Speak!

DESMOND (*laughingly*). Torrance, alias Bothman!

LAURA. Torrance! And you permitted him to escape?

DESMOND. I said you should know the truth and you shall. (*Pauses.*)

LAURA. Go on—go on!

DESMOND. This unfortunate man Torrance was merely the tool of another who hoped to profit by his silent partnership with this impostor who represented himself as Bothman.

HARTLEY. Name him, Desmond; name him!

JAMIESON. Let him name the man!

DESMOND. It is I—I!

ALL (*astonished*). You!

JENKINS (*aside to DESMOND at C.*). By chowder! Yeou kaint make me believe it, Desmond.

DESMOND (*aside as he watches LAURA*). Silence!

LAURA (*staggering C.*). My heart is breaking! (*She faints in DESMOND's arms up C.* HARTLEY stands *R.* of

table R. C., IKEY stands L. C., JAMIESON stands up C., laughing cynically. DESMOND stands looking down upon LAURA C. with JENKINS to his left at—)

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

SCENE: *Same as Act I. A month later.*

At rise enter JENKINS and LUCY L. U. E.

JENKINS (*sitting on steps of veranda R.*). Yeou say Mary Ann haint got back from the store yit, Lucy?

LUCY. If she has she must have come in a balloon.

JENKINS. Well, there ben't no balloons in South Dakota as I knows on, so she haint here, be gosh! Did she ever speak of me when yeou were about, Lucy?

LUCY (*going to door of house R.*). Well, I should say she did!

JENKINS (*proudly*). She couldn't help talkin' of me, by beeswax! What did she say?

LUCY. She said you were all right—(*pauses*).

JENKINS. She did, eh? What else?

LUCY. Even if you were a dried up old mummy.

JENKINS By gravy! She called me a dried up old mummy, did she?

LUCY (*laughingly*). Naw, I take it back. She is awful sweet on you, Uncle Jeb.

JENKINS. Couldn't do anything else, by ginger! How be Miss Laura today?

LUCY. She aint been herself since the day she went to Pine Valley a month ago. Must have been something awful happened to shake her up so.

JENKINS. Gosh all pumpkins! It shook me, too. Yeou kaint make me believe Desmond spoke the truth when he said he was the man behind the gun in that matter of the

land deal out West. The truth will come out jest like the measles, when Desmond gits back, by gum!

LUCY. Haven't you heard from him since he left?

JENKINS. Not a word, be gosh! Dropped plumb out of sight like widder Brown's goat when he fell into my well.

LUCY. Well, I'll bet all I'm worth that Desmond is O. K. and stands ace high. (*Exits into house R.*).

Enter JAMIESON L. U. E.

JENKINS. Yeou be right about Desmond, my gal. (*Sees JAMIESON.*) Hello, Jamieson! Heered from Desmond lately?

JAMIESON (*at C.*). No, nor am I likely to. He has decamped and we doubtless will never hear from him again.

JENKINS. I wouldn't bet all I had on that if I wuz yeou, Jamieson. You might go broke, by gravy!

JAMIESON (*laughingly*). He dare not show his face again after his confession in the dugout. It would condemn him utterly.

JENKINS. I wouldn't bet a nickel on your judgment, Jamieson. I took your tip in a hoss trade two months ago and I got stung to the tune of fifty dollars.

JAMIESON. We were both deceived in that horse, Jenkins.

JENKINS. I was, by gravy! But I don't know about yeou. It was kinder strange yeou should come out the next day in a fine suit of store clothes, wasn't it?

JAMIESON. You don't mean to insinuate—

JENKINS. (*interrupting*). Nope. A nod and a wink are the same to a blind mule; so take your choice. I'm goin' to the barn and have a look at Hartley's big Percheron horse. Come along Jamieson; 'twill do yeou good to look at something real honest once in awhile. (*Exit R. U. E.*)

JAMIESON (*going to veranda R.*). Affairs are shaping themselves well now that Desmond is in disgrace and a fugitive, most likely. Where can he have gone and what is he doing? Well, no matter. When Laura is my wife I shall know how to act, come what may. (*Looks off, then turns*

C.) She is coming now. I shall press the issue to the finish today. If she refuses me, I shall make her suffer.

Enter LAURA R. *She stands on veranda, looking pale and ill.*

JAMIESON (*to LAURA*). Miss Hartley!

LAURA (*starts*). You here again!

JAMIESON (*at C.*). And why should I not be? You know I love you—

LAURA (*interrupting as she comes down from veranda and sits in rustic chair C.*). That subject again! How often have I told you that it is distasteful to me.

JAMIESON (*gayly*). I cannot help reiterating my avowal, for it comes from an honest heart. Why treat me with disdain? I am an honorable man.

LAURA (*sighingly*). I would that I could believe you, Mr. Jamieson.

JAMIESON. You might were not your mental vision obscured by thoughts of this blackleg; Desmond—

LAURA. Stop! How dare you insult a man who by reason of his absence is unable to defend himself? Only cowards speak ill of the absent.

JAMIESON. I am no coward, Laura, yet I dare say anything to win the heart of the woman I adore.

LAURA. You love me! Why persecute me with your attentions when I have told you time and again that I do not—never can, love you?

JAMIESON. Once you are my wife I shall teach you how to love me.

LAURA (*rising in disgust*). Leave me, sir! Once for all, I tell you I shall never be your wife. (*Goes down C.*)

JAMIESON (*threateningly*). I trust you shall not force me to use harsh means to secure my ends?

LAURA (*starts*). Harsh means! What do you mean?

JAMIESON. You still think of this man Desmond as a martyr, I see.

LAURA. I do.

JAMIESON. And in the face of his confession of shame at the dugout, you still deem him a man of honor? If so, why did he escape—where is he now?

LAURA (*in anguish*). I do not know.

JAMIESON. I know, Miss Hartley.

LAURA. You?

JAMIESON. He dares not face you again, because this man Torrance is an ex-convict and Desmond's father!

LAURA (*dazed*). His father! I see it all now—light has dawned upon my soul!

JAMIESON (*sneeringly*). Indeed!

LAURA (*ecstatically*). I see him as he stood at the table in the dugout, his face crimsoned with blushes, his voice trembling with passion and tears, a wandering look in his eyes! He assumed his father's guilt, shouldered a crime with which he had nothing to do. Yes, it must be so! It all comes to me like the details of some dreadful dream! Sent to arrest a man of whose identity he was ignorant, he recognizes in that man his own father. There was but one course to pursue—to save his father at the sacrifice of his own good name. He sacrificed himself for his father! Oh, Harold! That I should have doubted you! Forgive me, forgive me! (*Sinks sobbing into rustic seat C.*)

JAMIESON (*standing over her*). You have a romantic imagination, Laura. Let us be practical. You must become my wife or your father is a ruined man.

LAURA. What new torture are you devising for me? How shall my father be ruined?

JAMIESON. I have discovered a fatal flaw in his deed to the land across the Missouri. Refuse to become my wife and I make this fact known to all the world.

LAURA (*loathingly*). Now I know you to be the monster that you are!

JAMIESON (*laughingly*). Your obstinacy forces me to resort to this measure, and, believe me, I regret it as much as you do.

LAURA. Leave me now! Your hateful presence sickens me. I pray heaven I may never see you again! (*Turns from him and turns R.*)

JAMIESON (*taking her hand*). You shall not leave without answering me!

Enter JENKINS, R. U. E. He comes down R. slowly and observes others.

LAURA (*struggling to release herself*). You will force me to call for help—

JENKINS (*stepping between them and throwing JAMIESON back*). I guess not, by gravy! You may go to the house now, Miss Laura. I'll attend to this wolf, by hek!

JAMIESON (*angrily*). Step out of my path, you ignorant rube!

JENKINS (*squaring off before JAMIESON*). By sassafras! I chewed Bill Smith's ear off fur calling me that once! Yeou be too common fur that, so I'll jist take a yank at your nose! (*He takes JAMIESON'S nose and tugs at it.*)

JAMIESON (*after he is released by JENKINS*). It is well for you that there is a lady present.

LAURA (*to Jenkins*). He dare not speak to me again after what has happened. (*She exits into house R.*)

JAMIESON. You and Miss Hartley enjoy a temporary triumph, Jenkins. My turn will come, and soon, too.

Enter MARY, L. U. E., followed by IKEY, who is carrying a number of bundles in clumsy fashion. MARY wears a large, gaudy hat and blue parasol, presenting a youthful appearance.

JENKINS (*as he follows JAMIESON up L.*). That's what the turkey gobbler said when he saw the Thanksgiving proclamation upon the fence corner. Look out for the dogs, they hate skunk almighty bad!

JAMIESON. My time will come, never fear. (*Exit L. U. E., after casting a disdainful glance at MARY and IKEY as he passes them.*)

MARY. That man here? If he dares to show his ugly face here again, I'll send for the police.

JENKINS. Leave him to me, Mary Ann. I jist pulled his beak awhile ago and I'll do it ag'in if he gives me the chance.

MARY. Did you do that, Jeb Jenkins? Well, you're a man after my own heart!

JENKINS. If I didn't think so, you wouldn't stand no chance of becoming Mrs. Jeb Jenkins No. 3 tomorrow. (*To IKEY.*) What be in them bundles, Ikey?

MARY. They are mine, Jeb. (*To IKEY.*) Are you sure you have dropped none of them on your way home?

IKEY (*at C.*). I'm so tired I don't know noddings no more.

Enter LUCY from house R. She comes C. to IKEY.

MARY. They are all here, thank goodness. (*To LUCY.*) Help Levinsky, Lucy, with those bundles. Be careful, now.

LUCY (*taking bundles from IKEY*). Sure, his back must be broke with that load. How are you, Ikey?

IKEY (*dolefully*). I aint sure how I is, Lucy. I tink I am still alife.

MARY (*to LUCY, protestingly*). Be careful how you handle those boxes, Lucy. They're not filled with sawdust. There's my trousseau, my new hat, my shoes, lingerie, everything.

JENKINS. I reckon Ikey thought you had bought out the hull Golden Rule store.

LUCY. Wait till you see the bill, Uncle Jeb.

JENKINS. I hedn't thought of that, by gravy! Matrimony comes high, but men like Jeb Jenkins never shirk their responsibilities to society on that account.

MARY. We'll discuss that matter after we're married, Jeb Jenkins. (*To LUCY and IKEY.*) Now take those bundles to the house, and see you don't drop any of them.

LUCY. All right, Aunt Mary. They're safe with me. (*She goes to veranda and in going up the steps stumbles and falls sprawling upon the boxes, crushing two of them so as to expose their contents.*)

MARY (*shrieks*). There, I knew you would do it, you clumsy girl. (*Picks up lingerie and conceals it behind her when JENKINS looks at her.*)

JENKINS. What be them things yeou be hidin' behind yeou, Mary Ann?

MARY (*exasperated*). Lingerie, you ninny!

JENKINS. That's the first time you ever cussed me, Mary Ann. New sassiety cuss work, I reckon.

MARY (*running to door R.*). Hurry with those things, Lucy, or I'll skin you alive! (*Exit into door of house R.*)

LUCY (*picking up boxes hastily and throwing them into door after MARY.*) All right, Aunt Mary. See you later, Ikey. (*Exit into house R.*)

JENKINS (*turning C.*). He! He! Lingerie! Ef that wan't a night shirt Mary Ann wus hidin', then I'm as nutty as widder Jones' new farm hand, who skipped out of the lunatick asylum, be gosh! (*To IKEY.*) Any news of Desmond yet, Ikey?

IKEY (*in a whisper*). Don't tole nobody—Desmond yust come back to town by de train dis morning early.

JENKINS (*delighted*). Desmond back! Did yeou talk to him?

IKEY. Sure. Him und me is polite. He say to me, how do, Ikey, und I say to him, how do, Desmond. Dat's all.

JENKINS. Yeou be both a couple of mutts! Didn't he mention Miss Hartley?

IKEY. Sure. He write a note und gif it to me. I got it here. (*Shows Jenkins a letter.*) It is for Miss Hartley.

JENKINS. So it be, by ginger! Where is he now?

IKEY. He say he vill come out here soon and den I meet Aunt Mary und she make a pack horse mit me.

Enter LAURA, from house R. She stands on veranda and watches JENKINS.

JENKINS (*dancing about*). He's back hum, and there will be somethin' doin' right smart, I reckon! By sassafras! I knowed Desmond was all wool and a yard wide!

LAURA (*to JENKINS*). What has happened, Uncle Jeb? (*Comes down to Jenkins C.*) You appear to be excited.

JENKINS. He! He! Not excited, but feelin' good. (*In whisper to LAURA.*) Desmond's back hum, be gosh!

LAURA (*starts*). Desmond back? Do you mean it, Uncle Jeb?

JENKINS. I wouldn't josh yeou fur a house and lot and Mary Ann thrown in, Miss Laura. He's back, by ginger!

LAURA (*staggers C.*). Where is he?

JENKINS. He sent a letter to you by Ikey. (*To IKEY.*) Don't stand there like the statue on the county building, Ikey, but rush that letter here!

IKEY. Sure, Uncle Jeb. Here it is. (*Gives letter to LAURA.*)

LAURA (*taking letter*). Thank you, Ikey. (*Opens letter C.*)

JENKINS (*going up C. with IKEY.*) Yeou stand on guard fur Desmond. If she sees him too sudden like, it might snap something in her pretty head.

IKEY. Sure. Before I do dat, I wants to ask you some questions.

JENKINS. Step lively, Ikey. What is it?

IKEY. How many schwallows—

JENKINS (*interrupting*). If yeou tries that on me ag'n I'll sculp yeou!

IKEY. Dis is anoder question. How many schwallows in a barrel of cider six feet high?

JENKINS (*rushes IKEY to L. U. E.*). I aint answerin' darned fool questions now! Stand thar till yeou see Desmond, then give us the word. (*He comes down C. and watches LAURA.*)

LAURA (*reading letter*). Miss Hartley—I have news of importance to you, and if you consent to see me I shall not only justify myself, but expose a villiain who would have victimized both your father and yourself. I shall follow the bearer of this to your home. Yours devotedly, Harold Desmond Matthews (*Folds up letter and hides it in her bosom.*) So his name is Matthews! The truth is revealed at last. My heart tells me I shall soon hear joyful tidings.

IKEY (*coming down C. to LAURA*). Desmond is coming!

LAURA. Desmond coming? I dare not face him now! He would read too easily the thoughts that have agitated me all these dreary weeks. (*Gayly to JENKINS.*) Tell him I shall be glad to see him, should he inquire after me. (*Goes to house.*) I'll return in a moment. (*Exit into house R.*)

JENKINS (*looking after her*). Inquire fur yeou? If he

don't, I'll run him through my new threshing machine. Guess I'll git out for awhile. Too many cooks spoil the broth. (*Exit R. U. E.*)

IKEY (*going to R. U. E., calling off after JENKINS*). I wants to ask you dot questions again, Jenkins. How many schwallows—(*Exit R. U. E. running.*)

Enter DESMOND, in fine walking suit, L. U. E. He comes down C. and looks about cautiously.

DESMOND. Will Laura consent to see me? She cannot refuse the meeting I pray for. She said she loved me, but after my avowal of guilt at the dugout, this sentiment may have changed to hate. (*Sighs and turns up R.*) When I tell her all, perhaps she will relent and her heart will respond to my own. (*Looks off R. U. E., starts.*) By all the gods! There's Jamieson, and with Hartley, too! What can that man want here, unless it be—no, no, Laura despises him as heartily as I do! I'll hide myself in this shrubbery and learn what I can of this rascal's plans. (*Hides in shrubbery up L., and watches.*)

Enter JAMIESON and HARTLEY, R. U. E. As they come down C., DESMOND strolls down after them slowly.

HARTLEY (*angrily to JAMIESON*). I tell you once for all, Jamieson, I wash my hands of your affairs. Laura is her own mistress, and will choose for herself.

JAMIESON. You refuse to ask her to consider my proposal of marriage?

HARTLEY. Absolutely.

JAMIESON. Then I shall be compelled, against my will, to employ such measures as may force your compliance, Mr. Hartley.

HARTLEY. I'm tired of your threats, Jamieson.

JAMIESON (*takes document from his pocket and holds it aloft*). I have here the absolute proof of a flaw in the title to your land across the Missouri, and once this is known to the heirs of Michael Horton, from whom you bought it, the property is lost to you forever!

HARTLEY (*alarmed*). Flaw in my title? It cannot be.

JAMIESON (*waving document aloft*). But I have the proof here! Force Laura to wed me and I return you this document and promise silence forever!

DESMOND (*taking document from JAMIESON and stepping between him and Hartley*). The very document I have been searching for, Jamieson!

JAMIESON (*starts back alarmed*). Desmond! The devil!

HARTLEY (*amazed*). You here, Desmond!

DESMOND (*scanning document*). It would appear I arrived at the proper moment.

JAMIESON. Return that document to me, or I shall have you arrested!

DESMOND. It belongs to Mr. Hartley, to whom I take pleasure in returning it. (*Gives it to Hartley*.)

HARTLEY (*surprised*). Why, this is the original deed to my land, stolen with the agreement six weeks ago! How did you get hold of it, Jamieson?

JAMIESON (*aside, in terror*). The net draws tighter! (*To HARTLEY*.) It was given me by Torrance, this man's father.

DESMOND. He convicts himself! He denied that he knew Torrance prior to the day of the robbery.

HARTLEY. So he did. And this is the man who would have forced me to exert my influence to aid his plan to wed Laura! Leave this place, you thief!

JAMIESON. You shall regret those words, Mr. Hartley. As for this man (*turning to DESMOND*), he dare not produce Torrance.

Enter LAURA from house. *She stands on veranda and listens.*

DESMOND (*sadly*). I cannot, for—for Torrance is dead!

ALL (*surprised*). Torrance dead!

DESMOND. He died of apoplexy at Mitchell two weeks ago, but not before he had made a sworn affidavit charging you, Jamieson, with hatching the burglary of Mr. Hartley's office.

JAMIESON. No one will believe the sworn statement of an ex-convict, particularly after you had publicly acknowledged the crime.

Enter JENKINS and IKEY, R. U. E. They stand and watch.

DESMOND. I did acknowledge the crime, but only to save time and protect my poor persecuted father.

LAURA (*on veranda, aside*). I knew it—I knew it!

HARTLEY. Torrance your father!

DESMOND. Aye, my father, a victim of fatal circumstances, which wrecked his life. He was a convict, though innocent, for I have here the dying statement of the man for whose crime he suffered more than four years' imprisonment. (*Shows document.*)

JAMIESON (*annoyed—laughingly*). All this does not exonerate you, Desmond.

DESMOND. I have something more of interest to you, Jamieson. (*Takes another document from pocket.*) Here is the sworn affidavit of Clancy, filed by me in the county court this morning. It charges the theft to you.

JAMIESON (*startled*). You lie! Clancy is not in South Dakota.

DESMOND. He is in the calaboose at this moment, Jamieson, and ready to testify against you.

JAMIESON (*turning upstage*). I shall see into this—

DESMOND (*restraining him*). Don't be in a hurry, Jamieson. I have more news for you. Your syndicate has declined to buy Mr. Hartley's land, and he is requested to return the \$10,000 forfeit advanced by them through you, in lieu of which this agreement is cancelled. (*Takes another document from pocket and gives it to Hartley.*)

JAMIESON (*in a rage*). What devilish work is this?

DESMOND. Rather hard to be exposed so unmercifully, eh, Jamieson? One thing more and I am done. I have learned much in the past four weeks, and not the least interesting of my discoveries is your wife and family, whom you abandoned in Nebraska three years ago.

JAMIESON. You lie!

DESMOND. If you think so, go to the hotel, where she awaits my commands.

JAMIESON. You shall answer to me for these calumnies, Desmond.

DESMOND. My name is not Desmond. I am Harold Desmond Matthews, at your service.

JAMIESON (*going to L. U. E.*). You shall taste of my revenge, Matthews. (*Exit L. U. E.*)

HARTLEY. Stop him! Don't allow him to escape!

DESMOND (*laughingly*). There is no danger that he will escape. I have four of my deputies on the lookout for him. See. (*He leads HARTLEY up C. and they look off L. U. E.*) They have him now. If he gets off with less than ten years in prison I don't know the law in South Dakota.

HARTLEY (*taking DESMOND's hand*). I owe you a debt of gratitude I shall never be able to discharge, Desmond—I beg your pardon, Mr. Matthews.

DESMOND. You owe me nothing, Mr. Hartley. It is I who owe you thanks for your faith in me.

HARTLEY (*in whisper, as he points to LAURA on veranda*). I'll swear she never lost faith in you, my boy.

DESMOND. Thank God for your words, Mr. Hartley.

JENKINS (*taking DESMOND's hand*). Count me in on the congratulations, by gravy! I'm state committeeman from this district, and if yeou want to go to congress next year I'll send yeou there, by chowder!

DESMOND (*laughingly*). I'm not looking for political honors, Uncle Jeb.

IKEY (*to DESMOND*). I vants to ask you a question, Mr. Desmond.

DESMOND. What is it, Ikey?

IKEY. How many schwallows—

DESMOND (*forces him up R.*). I'll swallow you whole, if you dont stop your nonsense! Get out, all of you! (*Exeunt JENKINS and IKEY, laughing, R. U. E.* HARTLEY, *who has been talking to LAURA on the veranda, exits into house R.* DESMOND *comes down C.*, while LAURA *comes slowly to C.*)

LAURA (*aside, as she eyes DESMOND*). What will he say, and how shall I answer him?

DESMOND (*at C. to LAURA*). Miss Hartley—Laura.

LAURA (*agitated*). Harold.

DESMOND. You have heard all?

LAURA. Yes, all.

DESMOND. And you do not revile me? You have not lost faith in me?

LAURA. Never for an instant, Harold.

DESMOND. And your faith will endure forever, Laura?

LAURA. Forever.

DESMOND (*embracing her*). My wife!

LAURA (*in DESMOND's arms*). My husband!

DESMOND. In the days to come we will learn to forget the troubles that clouded our lives during the period that I was Town Marshal. (*Both stand embraced until—*)

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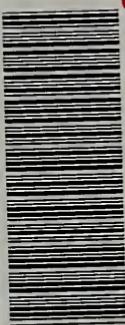
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